

AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF GAYS AND LESBIANS LIVING IN THE INANDA AREA

By Nombuso Thembi Mthembu

Student number: 202518057

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University of KwaZulu-Natal**

Dr Antoinette D'amant

Staff No: 24873

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION	2
1.1. Background	2
1.2. What is homosexuality?	3
1.3. Homosexuality and power relations	4
1.4. The disjuncture between policy and practice	5
1.5. The reason why I developed an interest in researching this topic	7
1.6. The purpose of the research and intended outcomes	9
CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW	11
2.1. Introduction	11
2.2. Defining the 'other' and the evolution of homophobia	12
2.3. The rhetoric of liberal policy	15
2.4. Homosexuality and homophobia in black communities	18
2.5. Socialization, gender roles and unequal power relations	20
2.6. Levels of oppression	23
2.6.1. <i>Families' attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexual parenting</i>	23
2.6.2. <i>Schools' attitudes to homosexuality</i>	25
2.6.3. <i>The attitude of the church</i>	27
2.7. Hate-crimes against homosexuals	30
2.8. Youth at risk	33
2.9. 'Coming out' - breaking the silence	38
2.10. The complexity of identity	41
2.11. Developing a liberatory consciousness	47
CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	48
3.1. Introduction	48
3.2. A Qualitative Research Design	48

3.3. An interpretive approach	49
3.4. Narrative inquiry	49
3.5. My sample	50
3.6. Context	50
3.7. Data collection	51
3.8. The role of the researcher	53
3.9. Validity	54
3.10. Interpretation, discussion and presentation	54
3.11. Ethical Issues	55
CHAPTER FOUR - PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA	57
4.1. Introduction	57
4.2. Theme 1: Experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda Area	57
4.2.1. <i>Gays and lesbians experience victimization</i>	57
4.2.2. <i>Prejudices are experienced as being pervasive</i>	58
4.2.3. <i>A sense of burdening heterosexuals is experienced</i>	59
4.2.4. <i>'Coming out' is experienced as one of the hardest things</i>	60
4.2.5. <i>A feeling of displacement is experienced</i>	61
4.3. Theme 2: Impact of experiences on identity	63
4.3.1. <i>An identity not worthy of help</i>	63
4.3.2. <i>An identity that is not given much regard</i>	64
4.3.3. <i>A poisoned and disapproved identity</i>	65
4.3.4. <i>An identity that has, and continues to, fight for rights</i>	65
4.4. Conclusion	67
CHAPER FIVE – CONCLUSION	68
5.1. Introduction	68
5.2. An identity that experiences victimization and the pervasiveness of prejudices	68
5.3. A displaced identity that burdens heterosexuals with “coming out”	69

5.4. Experiencing living a poisoned identity that is unworthy of help and given little regards	71
5.5. Experiencing an identity strong enough to fight for its rights	72
5.6. Conclusion	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75
APPENDIX 1 - INTERVIEW GUIDE	
APPENDIX 2 – TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS	
APPENDIX 3 – LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR	
APPENDIX 4 – TURNITIN REPORT	

ABSTRACT

The study emerges against a global and local backdrop of longstanding oppression and stigmatization of gays and lesbians, due to their sexual orientation. Regardless of transformative policies in South Africa which declare equal acceptance, treatment and inclusion of gay and lesbian citizens, prejudice and unfair discrimination still exists. The study investigates the experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa with the view to developing a greater understanding of their experiences and realities of 'otherness' and oppression. The conceptual model which frames the study is based on the generic model of social identity development and general model of oppression put forward by Hardiman and Jackson (1997), offering a useful lens through which to better identify oppression in the experiences and realities of gays and lesbians. The focus on understanding human experiences locates the study firmly within a qualitative research design. This focus also led to the selection of personal narratives as the strategy of inquiry, thereby allowing the researcher to enter worlds of experiences different from her own. Face- to- face, semi-structured interviews with eight participants (four gays and four lesbians, between the ages of twenty one and twenty five) comprised the method of data generation. The participants were selected as a result of a snowballing sample method. All live near each other in the Inanda area and are in regular social contact with each other. While research using a small sample of eight participants from the Inanda area cannot claim to be a comprehensive study into the experiences of gays and lesbians in all South African communities, these narratives reflect to a large degree, experiences of 'otherness' and oppression common to all gay and lesbian people.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since South Africa's emergence from world pariah status after the demise of apartheid, South Africa has been heralded as a beacon of light and a new moral authority on the ideals of democracy. The South African Constitution (ratified in 1996) upholds the valuing, respecting and equal treatment of all people and promises equality to all people irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion or gender. This Equality Clause also expressly prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation and made South Africa's constitution the first in the world to do so (Croucher, 2011). In addition, South Africa became the first country in Africa to legalize marriage between people of the same sex (on 30 November 2006) (Judge, Manion and de Waal, 2008). While South Africa was hailed as a model for the rest of the world and resulted in a well-organised gay and lesbian social movement in South Africa being able to secure remarkable gains for its constituency, there is inevitably a gap between policy and practice. The issue of homosexuality in South Africa is clearly fraught with tensions and contradictions.

Against the movement to celebrate the authentic African identity and claims about the un-African nature of homosexuality, the movement towards being openly gay or lesbian among Africans in particular, is met with a great deal of hostility from various sources. While constitutionally, South Africa is seen to respect and recognize all people's rights in keeping with its overall commitment to democratic values, what transpires in everyday practices and lived experiences is often inconsistent with this message. The reality is that these ideals of inclusion and social justice do not translate widely to practices in African communities at large. Minority social groups such as gay and lesbian people, continue to suffer from various forms of oppression as a direct result of their 'otherness'.

1.1. Background

Gays and lesbians have historically been victims of exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, and marginalisation and denied the right to be different or 'other' from the norm of heterosexuality as imposed by society. Gay and lesbian people have suffered rejection, victimization, been denied a voice and have been unjustly subjected to prejudice and discrimination (Griffin, 1993) Group identification and social identity development for gays and lesbians has long been synonymous with negative characteristics and inferior status in society.

Since South Africa became a democratic country certain rights have become available to citizens previously described as 'other'. The Constitution of South Africa states that people should be treated equally, based on the principles of human dignity, equality, and the advancement of human rights and freedom to all. The right to equality is discussed in Section 9 of the Constitution and deals with issues concerning the equality clause. Section 9 (1) provides the basic principles behind the right to equality by stating that everyone is equal before the law. The overall vision of the Constitution of South Africa is to protect every citizen from unfair treatment and any forms of oppression. Section 9 of the Constitution of South Africa declares that neither the State nor any other person may discriminate unfairly against any individual or social group on the basis of any of the following forms of difference: race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, culture or language.

In keeping with the vision of equality for all, supporting legislation is in place to prevent discrimination in a range of areas (Sanpath, 2006). An example of this is the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000, which commits the government to promote equality on all the grounds.

While South African policy respects and recognises all people's rights, which is in keeping with its overall commitment to democratic values, what transpires in everyday practice is not always consistent with this inclusive vision. The reality is that inclusion, tolerance and respect are not always practised in communities. Gay and lesbian people are still considered 'other' and still experience various forms of oppression on a daily basis.

1.2. What is homosexuality?

Homosexuality describes sexual desire or relationships between people of the same sex. Homosexuals are therefore individuals who experience sexual desire and engage in relationships with members of the same sex. Many consider these terms to imply a sexual orientation (an unchangeable, psychosexual organisation that may be congenital and inherited) rather than a sexual preference, a term which suggests that homosexual behaviour may be a matter of choice (Fone, 2000). "Homosexuals are divided by sex and by terminology into 'gay men' and 'lesbians' and are distinguished from 'bisexual', 'transgendered' and 'transsexual' persons" (Fone, 2000, 3). This research will concern itself with gay and lesbian participants - gays being understood as men who have a sexual orientation towards other men, and lesbians as women who have a sexual orientation towards other women.

Homosexuality is considered the opposite of heterosexuality which is considered normal. By normal it is meant the sexual practice of the majority of people (Kertbeny, in Fone, 2000). The terms homosexuality and heterosexuality indicate differing, opposing categories of sexuality and have “unfortunately reinforced a growing psychiatric tendency to define homosexuality as abnormal” (Fone, 2000, 4). The term “homosexual” was coined by Kertbeny, a German-Hungarian journalist in a letter written to sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, in 1868. He used it again in 1869, in an anonymous pamphlet opposing the Prussian anti-sodomy law. Kertbeny (in Fone, 2000) argued that the state had no right to penalize homosexual behaviour, and that “homosexuals” should not be the object of derision and stigma.

The model society has been offered as normal and the standard people are expected to uphold with regard to sexuality and sexual orientation is that of heterosexuality. It is therefore a standard by which everything else is measured, a standard which privileges heterosexuality. Heterosexuality and homosexuality have been fixed in medical terminology and public opinion to identify two separate and different kind of sexuality, and two different and separate kinds of sexual actors (Fone, 2000).

1.3. Homosexuality and power relations

According to Harro (2000, 15), “we are born into a specific set of social identities, which predispose us to unequal roles in the dynamic system of oppression”. According to Hardiman and Jackson’s (1997) model of oppression, in each case of social identity, there is an agent group which is considered dominant (systemically advantaged and privileged) and a target group which is considered subordinate (systemically disadvantaged, marginalized and discriminated against). Unequal and hierarchical power relations almost always result in the dominant or privileged groups benefiting from the disempowerment of subordination of targeted groups. Members of the agent group are dominant, powerful, superior, advantaged, privileged, independent and autonomous. This privileged social group has the power to define the world and the way things are or should be, define the roles that different individuals and social groups should play, determine what is ‘normal’, construct knowledge, set standards, name what is acceptable and appropriate, and reject what is not, name the inferior, inappropriate and unacceptable and set themselves up as the norm that all people should be aspiring to. Target groups are therefore rendered subordinate, powerless, inferior, disadvantaged, marginalized, and dependant on the standards and norms which are set and defined by the agents groups. Such unequal social relations of power inevitably result in oppression.

Whether one is allocated within a target or an agent identity is determined by the social group an individual is identified with and with which an individual identifies him/herself with. (Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda, Hackman, Peters and Zuniga, 2000) draws attention to the negative stigmas and stereotypes that have been attached to homosexuality and people who are identified with and who identify themselves with this subordinate and target social group; how negative attitudes internalized by members of the homosexual group often damage the spirit and stifle emotional growth; and, how homophobia serves the dominant group by maintaining power over homosexuals – the target group members who are made victims of rejection, isolation, marginalization and discrimination (all forms of oppression).

1.4. The disjuncture between policy and practice

United States president Obama stated that the US Supreme Court's ruling that gays and lesbians were eligible for federal benefits (thus nullifying the US Defence of Marriage Act of 1996), was a victory for American democracy, and that democracy and the belief that all people should be equal is the foundation of the US (The Times, 30 August 2013). The Times newspaper further reported that consensual same-sex conduct is a crime in thirty eight countries in sub-Saharan African, and Amnesty International urged Obama to use his African trip to speak out against threats to gays and lesbians, which it said were reaching dangerous levels on the continent. It was reported that Obama was encouraged to discuss the need to consider homosexuals equal before the law with African countries.

In a review of homosexuality in fifty African Societies, XinLing Li (2009) found substantial evidence which supported the idea that same-sex intercourse is traditional and indigenous, and no evidence to uphold the argument that one group ever introduced homosexuality to another. However, some disjuncture was noted while collecting the material for this review. According to XinLing Li (2009) evidence suggested that homophobia came to a rise after the 2009 election in South Africa, when President Jacob Zuma denounced homosexuality during his campaign, even though this was a conscious betrayal of the ANC'S Freedom Charter. XinLing Li (2009) found further evidence of the widespread practice of corrective rape against gays and lesbians in South Africa. With social – political phenomena throughout countries and societies in Africa creating disjunctures between democratic ideology and everyday cultural beliefs and practices, XinLing Li stated that little has been done “towards the desired political mechanisms for social change and for the betterment of the LGBTI people” (XinLing Li, 2009,1).

The Constitution has made South Africa the first country in the world to provide lesbians and gays with equal rights and legal protection (Sanpath, 2006). A media summary stated that in December 2005, in the South African Constitutional Court, a judgement was announced, ruling that same sex marriages would be legalised. The South African parliament was urged to change the wording of the Marriage Act, which previously stated that marriage can only occur between a man and a woman (Sanpath, 2006). It was suggested that the Act would be revised to include the words wife, husband or spouse.

Although given democratic rights to equal participation in society, without discrimination on the grounds of any difference, attitudes of prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping with regard to sexual orientation still exist in South African communities and society at large. Inclusive legislation has not gone unchallenged. Homosexuality remains a sensitive issue which has divided many people, including religious groups and traditional community leaders. Clear evidence of institutional discrimination still exists. Rhema Church Pastor Ray McCauley commented that, *"It is a sad day for South Africa when the very bedrock foundation of society, the family, is redefined by a court"*, adding that *"this ruling totally undermines marriage as we know it and the cherished formation of healthy living families"* (Sanpath, 2006).

In 2005 the South African National Blood Service reported that gay and lesbian people were forbidden to donate blood. In their report they stipulated that they would not accept blood donations from sexually active homosexuals (Sanpath, 2006). The reason given was that the risk of receiving HIV-infected blood from gay men was greater. The report released by the South African Blood Services further stated, that the South African National Blood Services took a decision based on their research which shows that the HIV virus and other blood infections were more likely to be present in the blood of gay men (Sanpath, 2006). This reflects the stigma in society in general, that is attached to men who have sexual relations with other men – that they are at higher risk of carrying HIV/AIDS. This example of institutional discrimination occurs through statements, press releases and biased questions in questionnaires that donors are compelled to complete before donation of blood (Sanpath, 2006). In response to the critique that the policies of the South African Blood National Services and the wording of their questionnaire needed to be more sensitive, and more relevant to the South African context, the Communication Officer responded that any changes would only be effected in compliance with the requirements of the international standards for blood transfusion services stipulated by the World Health Organisation.

Although legislation favours and protects the rights of gays and lesbians in South Africa, various communities are struggling to accept this. Intolerance and stigmatisation are key experiences of gay and lesbian people who therefore find it difficult to 'come out of the closet', to say who they are. Gay and lesbian people have been discriminated against to such an extent that even their own families fail to accept their identities. This makes the lives of gay and lesbian people very difficult and forces them to deny their true sexual orientations and identities and live under false pretences.

Gays and lesbians face a lot of challenges despite being constitutionally free like other citizens. They experience homophobia, heterosexism, and live under pressure of being harassed and victimised wherever they go. The persecution and subsequent death in 2006 of one of my participants who had agreed to take part in this research endeavour, was a glaring example of double standards and policy rhetoric – reading that 'everyone has the right to life' in the Constitution (1996, 11), while witnessing heterosexual members of the Inanda community commenting that this participant's death was simply "minus one trouble".

Homosexuals who are being victimised and killed belong to the larger society and they have families and friends who deeply care about their lives. Families become vulnerable as their children are punished for being homosexual. I agree with the sentiments of Wall, Currie and Erasmus (2000) that violence which punishes forms of sexual expression for gays and lesbians degrades and devalues homosexuals in our broader society, and that such a culture of intolerance and discrimination is inconsistent with human dignity and the ideals of inclusion and social justice.

1.5. The reason why I developed an interest in researching this topic

I have been teaching at a primary school in Inanda, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, for over thirty years. Recently two ex-pupils disclosed to me that they are gay and shared with me their experiences of being victimised by their friends and rejected by their parents. Through listening to their stories, I have developed a growing empathy for these youngsters. I am concerned that family relationships are being eroded due to ignorance, discrimination and prejudice towards homosexuality. Parents seem to have little idea how to deal with children who are gay or lesbian. Furthermore, these youngsters suffer great rejection, victimization and prejudice at the hands of the community at large.

Having recently spoken to a community leader about policies of inclusion with regard to community involvement and community activities, the negativity towards the gay and lesbian community was clearly evident. The community leader stated that he did not approve of the acceptance and the inclusion of homosexuals, adding that homosexuality, according to the Zulu culture, should not be discussed in public. He stated further that if a child belonging to a certain family is homosexual, that family should be pitied, as homosexuality cannot be accepted in the Zulu culture, and families should accept the inevitable shame that accompanies having a child who is gay or lesbian.

A similar attitude was voiced by a school principal in the area who stated that such things are 'un-African', and added that he was shocked and concerned that I wanted to conduct research into the experiences of gay and lesbian youth with the aim of understanding more about "these people". A local church pastor stated that homosexuality is against the will of God, and because it is considered as sin, he could not compromise and accept such things.

Besides a growing empathy towards gays and lesbians I realised my sense of indignation in response to the negative and destructive way gays and lesbians are treated by families and community members. Since studying issues of oppression and social justice, I have become more critically aware of the social injustice of the oppressive way that gays and lesbians are viewed and treated. I have grown to understand more and more the negative effects of discrimination, prejudice and alienation on gays and lesbians. I believe that gays and lesbians, despite their differences, are human beings in need of acceptance, respect and dignity.

One of the participants, who had signed the consent form agreeing to participate in this research, was raped and killed before I could even interview him. He was found dead in the outskirts of the Inanda area. He had been honest about being gay, so this was common knowledge. His parents and friends suspected that homophobic peers committed this crime. His burial was on 4 May 2006. Many gays and lesbians from the community attended the funeral. The atmosphere was at first extremely tense, and the gay and lesbian youths were standing apart from the rest of the community members. It was clear that they did not feel accepted by and part of the community and that the community in general did not want them there. One of the gay boy's family members addressed the gathering, urging them to be accepting of everyone who was present and wishing to pay respects to the friend and his family.

The violent and unnecessary loss of this young man affected me deeply. It is such a glaring contradiction that the constitutional protection of inclusion and social justice requires citizens to acknowledge the value and worth of all individuals as members of our community, while such negative attitudes and cruel behaviour is occurring in our communities towards some forms of difference and otherness. Talk about human rights and dignity abounds in community gatherings, and yet heterosexuality is seen as the only acceptable sexual orientation and homophobia is rampant. Inclusion means including all forms of diversity, not just certain forms. We cannot choose to accept and respect only some social groups that have been seen as other (for example blacks) while maintaining prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes and behaviour towards other social groups, such as homosexuals. Yet double standards seem to be the reality in many of the black (African) communities.

Although legislation favours and protects the rights of gays and lesbians in South Africa, it is clear that various communities are struggling to accept this. The route of harming and getting rid of gays and lesbians, rather than changing discriminatory attitudes and curbing oppressive behaviour, is unfortunately often the chosen route. New policies on gays and lesbians support them in that they are recognised as people just like everyone else, treated fairly, and free to choose their own sexual orientation and identities. But this is clearly not enough to change the harsh reality of prejudice and discrimination against gays and lesbians. More needs to be done in terms of further supporting gay and lesbian people. It is my firm belief that they are like everyone else; they deserve a chance in life and must be treated fairly.

1.6. The purpose of the research and intended outcomes

It is the intention of this research to investigate the experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area, with the view to developing a greater understanding of their realities in this regard.

The overall research questions are:

- What are the experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area?
- How do these experiences impact on their personal identities?

While research using a small sample of eight participants cannot claim to be a comprehensive study into the experiences of gays and lesbians in all South African communities, these narratives would undoubtedly reflect to a large degree the experiences of gays and lesbians in

the Inanda area. It is further hoped that through hearing the voices of gay and lesbian participants in this study, an increased awareness, acceptance and tolerance of gays and lesbians will be encouraged in readers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Historically, gays and lesbians have not been fully recognised nor afforded equal rights or social status in numerous societies both globally and locally (Adams *et al*, 2000). Homophobic attitudes and the stigma attached to their 'otherness' has resulted in their mistreatment and oppression. The development of an identity, although commonly made along the lines of social difference, is more frequently accomplished through practices of exclusion, prejudice, discrimination and oppression (Vincent, 2003). Group identification and social identity development for gays and lesbians is synonymous with negative characteristics and inferior social status. They have been "unjustly subjected to prejudice and discrimination" (Adams *et al*, 1997, 14):- regarded as criminals, sick, abnormal; rejected because of their difference; excluded from many activities taking place in their own communities; discriminated against, prejudiced, victimized, harassed and often the target of violence (D'Augelli, 1989). Gays and lesbians have faced longstanding oppression and stigmatization due to their 'deviant' sexual orientation. Homophobia, the fear or hatred of, and hostility towards gay and lesbian people, has existed throughout history and continues to operate today. It can manifest itself in many forms, including derogatory comments or jokes, physical attacks, discrimination in the work place and negative media representation.

While very few large-scale research projects investigating homosexual youth have taken place in South Africa, there have been several important small-scale investigations (Richardson, 2006). These smaller studies have focused on homophobia and the negative experiences of gay and lesbian youth, and the main conclusion drawn from these studies is that despite liberal laws which have been introduced to protect the rights of homosexuals, including the Constitution of South Africa, gay and lesbian youth are still victimized, bullied and harassed "even by those who are expected to uphold the principles of the South African Constitution, including school teachers" (Richardson, 2006, 135). Richardson (2006) notes that in the year 2006 homophobic abuse, sexual prejudice, and violence against gay and lesbian youth persists.

In this chapter, literature related to the experiences and realities of gays and lesbians will be reviewed, within the global context and within the context of South Africa. The literature traces a range of issues relating to this research, including: a history of homophobia; the complexity of gay and lesbian identities; the sources and effects of homophobic stigmatization and oppression; and perceptions of traditional “African” culture. This chapter also presents key characteristics and defining features of oppression in relation to heterosexism, the specific form of oppression which directly relates to my research focus of investigating the experiences of gay and lesbian participants. A generic model of social identity development and oppression offered by Hardiman and Jackson (1997) provides a theoretical framework with which to investigate how participants experience being defined by their sexual orientation, which is understood as subordinate, inferior and deviant from the dominant social group defined as heterosexual. This theoretical lens speaks directly to investigating and understanding the experiences of homosexual participants in light of a society and community which manifests systemic subordination and oppression of homosexuals as a target social group, and labels them as ‘other’ in relation to the dominant standard of heterosexuality.

2.2. Defining the ‘other’ and the evolution of homophobia

Turner (1975) explains a social group as two or more individuals who share a common social identification of themselves, and perceive themselves to be members of specific social categories. Hogg and Abrams (1988) define social identity as an individual’s knowledge that s/he belongs to a certain group within society. Social identity development thus brings into sharp focus commonalities and differences between different categories and different social groups (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Such a process of categorization produces stereotypic perceptions that all members of a social category or social group share one or more characteristics which distinguishes them from another social group. Social identity development therefore relies heavily on the classification of self and others on the basis of similarities and differences.

People are commonly defined as ‘other’ on the basis of a number of categories: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, and physical or mental ability, and individuals’ social identities are developed on the basis of these categorisations. Each of these categories manifests unequal and differential treatment and has some form of oppression

associated with it. The type of oppression which directly relates to the social identities defined as 'other' in this research endeavour is heterosexism.

According to Vincent (2003) identification and identity development, although commonly made along lines of social difference, is more frequently accomplished through practices of exclusion prejudice, discrimination and oppression. Group identification and social identity development for gays and lesbians is synonymous with negative characteristics and inferior status. Gay and lesbian people suffer rejection and victimization, and are "unjustly subjected to prejudice and discrimination" (Adams *et al*, 1997, 14).

Fone (2000), an acclaimed expert in gay and lesbian history, found that homosexuality has always been the object of legal and social persecution. He explains how the biblical stories of Sodom became the primary source for later prohibitions against homosexuality and charts the subtle shifts in public attitudes and the law, from Anglo-Saxon edicts that condemned homosexuality and imposed death by burning upon confessed homosexuals, to Victorian decrees that punished sodomy with castration. Fone (2000) demonstrates that the presence of homophobia in society remains one of the central tenets of law, science, faith and literature, and defines the very essence of what it means to be male or female.

Plant (1988) began collecting available information concerning the anti-minority campaigns undertaken by the Nazis when he registered at the University of Basil in Switzerland. His search for relevant documents has provided evidence that many gays were arrested without trial and put into concentration camps, where they were forced to wear pink triangles, and were often beaten, tortured, castrated or killed (Plant, 1988). Legislation condemning sexual acts between males was enacted in Germany in 1935. Any contact between males of any age that could be noted as sexual was severely punished. Simply being suspected in this regard could apparently result in incarceration. Legislation served as a directive to achieve the "ruthless persecution of sexual vagrants" (Plant, 1988, 303).

Plant (1988, 303) reports that in October 1936, Heinrich Himmler, the Gestapo chief and architect of the Nazi anti-gay campaign demanded the "elimination of all degenerates" and created the Schutzstaffeln, or SS, "an outgrowth not only of his anti-Semitism but also of his aversion to all contragenics." According to Plant (1988), Himmler coined this expression to characterise any group that did not fit into the framework of society, including anything non-

Germanic, anything non-standard such as Jews, Romani (gypsies), the disabled, Jehovah's Witnesses and gays. Newspapers would publish cases of the arrest or disappearance of any gay men during the Third Reich, resulting in a "conspiracy of silence" (Plant, 1988, 303). In 1969 a compromise law was pushed through in Germany that abolished all of Hitler's previous legislation, granting those that wore pink triangles some form of reprieve (Plant, 1988).

Although there has been a global move towards abolishing laws and behaviours that criminalise homosexuality, there also needs to be a change in cultural attitudes if homophobia is to be addressed and eliminated. In Latin American countries, the dominance of a 'machismo' culture resulted in the stigmatisation of sex between men and violence against homosexuals. Progressive legislation has been implemented by governments to protect gays and lesbians, but this does not always address the homophobic attitudes embedded in the culture. Despite the global human right movement, a number of countries maintain laws which discriminate against homosexuality and render it illegal. Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen parts of Nigeria and Somalia continue to punish homosexuality with death. Homosexuals still face persecution and violence in many forms and even if countries have adopted human rights laws, homophobia is still rife.

Adams *et al* (2000) state that homophobia in black communities is more exercised than in other communities in the United States. Within Africa, homophobic strands have appeared in various African nationalisms (Hoad, 2007).

In September 1999, Daniel arap Moi, then president of Kenya, announced: "It is not right that a man should go with another man or a woman with another woman. It is against African tradition and Biblical teachings. I will not shy away from warning Kenyans against the danger of this scourge" (Hoad, 2007, 7). The reporting on the marriage of a gay couple in Kenya in a Kenyan newspaper and a local radio station in Mombasa led to anti-gay violence and to the arrest of six alleged gay men (Gevisser, 1995).

President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda was quoted in the state-owned newspaper *New Vision* in July 1998, as saying that he would prevent any homosexual rally taking place in Uganda and that he had ordered the Criminal Investigations Department to look for, charge and lock homosexuals up (Hoad, 2007, 7).

President Nujoma of Namibia, while addressing students at the University of Namibia in 1996, made a clear statement that the Republic of Namibia did not allow homosexuality or lesbianism there, and that it would be eradicated by arresting, deporting and imprisoning culprits. He went on to say that “those who are practicing homosexuality in Namibia are destroying the nation” and that “it is the devil at work” (Hoad, 2007, 7).

Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe, made his view of homosexuality quite clear when he banned the exhibit of GALZ (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe) from the Zimbabwean International Book Fair in 1995. He clearly voiced his disapproval of gay and lesbian sub-cultures in a public speech on 19 February 1995, at a Heroes Day rally for veterans of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle in Harare, where he referred to gays and lesbians as “sexual perverts” and made his notorious pronouncement: “If dogs and pigs don’t do it, why must human beings? Can human beings be human beings if they do worse than pigs?” (Hoad, 2007, 6).

Epprecht (2005) supports the view that gay and lesbian people encounter much discrimination in traditional cultures. Honourable Jerry Ekando of Namibia explained to the international press that “gay and lesbian rights can never qualify as fundamental rights” using the rationale that “if a male dog knows it’s right partner is a female dog, how can a human being fail to notice the difference?” (Epprecht, 2005, 6).

Most traditional societies in Africa believe that homosexuality pollutes their countries and misfortunes such as droughts, hunger and disease are often blamed on homosexuality (Epprecht, 2005). This has subsequently contributed to situations where individual gays and lesbians have been subjected to blackmail, job discrimination, police harassment, family ostracism, and even mob violence. It is clear that the challenge exists for traditional African communities to mobilise themselves towards promoting care, tolerance, and respect for equality and equal rights for every citizen.

2.3. The rhetoric of liberal policy

According to Young (2000) the basic relations of domination and subordination are remarkably resistant to change and patterns of inequality between social groups continue to be reproduced even in the face of deliberate efforts to change them. They may not be overt, direct and

obvious but oppression is always present, covert and camouflaged. Social inequality does not exist only in one place, or in one set of circumstances, but spreads through a complex web of relationships and structures, saturating most aspects of life in our society. Even with liberal policies which are unquestionably aligned to principles and practices of human rights, social justice and inclusion, this does not mean that oppression has been eliminated. Gays and lesbians the world over, still suffer discrimination and marginalisation in spite of laws which afford the same basic human rights to all people and citizens.

As a result of legislative and constitutional reform, individuals in many countries are free to “express a self-defined gender identity” as is included in the International Bill of Gender Rights, and to lead their lives accordingly (Adams *et al*, 2000, 309). In 1991 Lesotho was one of only two African nations to support the principle of expanding gay rights internationally in order to enrich democracy in the region. In 1994 Nelson Mandela (the first black President of a democratic South Africa) met with gay rights activists, and publicly endorsed their cause. However, inconsistencies exist between policy and practice in many countries which espouse democratic values. In an interview with Afrol News, 15 June 2002, Namibian President Sam Nujoma stated that human relationships must be promoted towards respecting each other’s culture and way of life and that it is important that people get along regardless of their differences (Dobell, 2002). However, Home Affairs Minister Jerry Ekandjo, ordered police recruits to “eliminate” homosexuals from Namibia (Frank, 2000).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, states that no person may be unfairly discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, on one or more grounds (this includes discrimination on the basis of any difference – gender, race, religious affiliation, class, ethnicity, language, ability/disability levels, HIV status and sexual orientation). With its Constitution, South Africa has joined the elite group of progressive democracies that have legalized same sex marriages - South Africa is the fifth country in the world and the first country in Africa to legalize same sex marriages (Judge, Manion and de Waal, 2008).

Despite the facts that the South African Constitution makes sexual practices, identity and expression a protected right accessible to all; includes a clause prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation; and has allowed the space for the topics of sex and sexuality to enter the arena of public debate and argument (Posel, 2003), South Africa remains “highly homophobic, patriarchal and heterosexist” (Matabeni, 2007, 102). While the legal view of

homosexuality in South Africa may be progressive, public opinion demonstrates the perpetuation of homophobic stigmatization in society. Regardless of policies which declare the equal treatment, acceptance and value of gay and lesbian citizens, prejudice and unfair discrimination still persist.

Hlatshwayo and Klugman (2001) stress the importance of redefining and recognizing sexual rights and examining the framework being used in South Africa to engage with these issues. Through their support of the Sexual Rights Campaign, Hlatshwayo and Klugman advocate that sexual rights and human rights should be respected and defended. Even though health care providers and policy makers have stated the importance that sex and sexuality be discussed by ordinary men and women, as a direct result of the AIDS pandemic, sexual rights as a concept has not received the attention it deserves (Hlatshwayo and Klugman, 2001). Although the pandemic has emphasized the need to talk about sex and sexuality, as well as about risk and protection, the topic has mostly had a heterosexual focus or has focused mainly on male experience (Posel, 2003).

Hlatshwayo and Klugman (2001) highlight that in a society in which women are subordinate to men, their power to negotiate and engage in decision making processes is undermined, and point out that sexual violence against women, especially in South Africa, has reached epidemic levels. Hlatshwayo and Klugman (2001) argue that this is primarily because talking about sexual rights challenges historical power bases of gender inequalities that hold men in an elevated socio-economic and cultural position over women. Under conditions and realities where sexual rights are generally subsumed within reproductive rights and women are generally considered only so far as their role in conceiving, it is problematic for women to experience their full potential through a positive experience of their sexuality (Hlatshwayo and Klugman, 2001). Within such a context, the rights and needs of people who are not heterosexuals and whose purpose in sexual intercourse is not procreation, are generally ignored.

Heteronormativity is “the institutionalization of exclusive heterosexuality in society” and assumes that there are only two sexes, each having its own predetermined gender role which pervades all social attitudes (Steyn and van Zyl, 2009). Steyn and van Zyl state their concern over the invisible power that heteronormativity has as an enduring dominant ideological formation in post-apartheid South Africa. Steyn and van Zyl (2009) note that the pervasive

ideology of heteronormativity renders the Constitution of South Africa with regard to its protection against discrimination of sexual orientation, as mere empty rhetoric.

On the topic of same-sex marriage, Reddy (2004) notes that although the law in post-apartheid South Africa has been powerful in affirming homosexual identities by offering intimate sexual relationships through marriage, it has not been successful in removing homophobia in the society (Steyn and van Zyl, 2009). Despite progressive legislation and public talks about protecting women, South Africa remains a place where the realization of rights in all their manifestations (which extends to the rights of gays and lesbians) remains mere rhetoric for many.

2.4. Homosexuality and homophobia in black communities

Gevisser and Cameron (1994) claim that homosexuality is an integral part of black South African culture. A significant finding of the research conducted by Polders and Wells (2004, cited in Richardson, 2006), was that LGB issues are frequently raised in black classrooms in South African townships because the presence of gays and lesbians in the classroom force the matter to be discussed (Richardson, 2006). In contrast, Zulu Monarch Goodwill Zwelithini, described homosexuality as "unZulu" at the 2005 Reed Dance (Daily News, September 26, 2005).

Many African leaders have condemned homosexuality as being "unAfrican" and an undesired consequence of western colonialism and imperialism (Luirink, 2000). A common view amongst traditional black heterosexuals is the view that liberal policies and legislature have come to destroy their authentic cultures and customs. Epprecht (2005) reports that a Zimbabwean traditional healer made the statement that white settlers had invented the word and the idea of homosexuality in order to bring shame upon Africans. With the clear rejection of the labels 'gay' and 'lesbian' as un-African, black people who embrace these labels may be seen to be outsiders who are trying to become "Westerners" (Richardson, 2006). Richardson (2006, 138) goes on to say that "in a number of traditional communities, such as those of the Sotho, Zulu and Xhosa people, same-sex erotic relationships are ignored on condition that the people involved conform to the dominant gender norms, fulfil their customary obligations, reject "gay" and "lesbian" identities, and don't flaunt their same-sex practices".

While traditional leaders may claim that homosexuality is a colonial import, evidence of San people paintings portray men engaging in sexual acts with other men, revealing that homosexuality existed before white colonialists arrived in South Africa (Luirink, 2000) therefore disputing the belief that it is a colonial import. The accounts from a range of literature based on various researchers' work in South African culture reveal to what extent homosexual codes are embedded in contemporary township culture. Despite prejudice and marginalization, homosexual societies are "very much part of the larger communities in which they operate and that gays and lesbians lead lives unexpectedly integrated into township culture" (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, 6).

In a Chamber of Mines Newsletter it was reported that the mines compound have long demonstrated and contributed to demonstrate, evidence of same-sex practice and homosexuality (Dlamini, 2000). Men working on the mines were not permitted to bring their wives to live with them in the compounds and it became standard practice that senior miners would take new miners as 'wives'. And yet, homophobic prejudice, discrimination and oppression continue to exist against homosexuality in black African culture.

Regardless of the moralizing and theorizing that accompanies the topic and notion of homosexuality, there has arisen much controversy about the un-African nature of homosexuality in many sub-Saharan African countries, and African authenticities struggle to imagine the relationship between Africa and homosexuality.

Osh (cited in Steyn and van Zyl, 2009) claim that indigenous Southern African meanings of sexuality and philosophies of sexualities within the secret domain of traditional healers have been silenced by the violence of the colonizing project. Meaning that sexuality amongst Southern African has been kept secret because of the violence pointed to unAfricans. Steyn and van Zyl (2009) further claim that Western influence in central knowledge production has produced many texts which explore African sexuality through a predominantly Western focus and understanding and that this has excluded or misrepresented authentic African-centred perspectives. For that reason little has been collected with true reflection on shaping sexuality in Southern African. Steyn and van Zyl (2009) note that contemporary discourses shaping South African sexualities are a complex mix of the dominant Western discourses, both the contemporary global strands and the colonial local infections. Steyn and van Zyl (2009) claim

that other researchers point out that despite historic silences on African sexualities, desire and pleasure have always been present through fantasy.

Epprecht's (2005) study has traced the history and traditions of homosexuality among black Africans from the pre-colonial era (the eighteenth century) to the present, using oral testimonies, memories, literature, criminal court records, and early government enquiries. Through this study, he has examined the emergence of modern gay and lesbian identities with the introduction of capitalism, colonial rule, and Christian education and explores the complex origins of homophobia. He highlights that although the gay rights movement emerged in several South African countries in the 1980s, the very idea of homosexuality remains controversial in these selfsame countries, denounced by politicians and the church leaders as an example of how western decadence has corrupted their traditions. Epprecht (2005) challenges that assertion, arguing that Europeans introduced homophobia, not homosexuality.

2.5. Socialization, gender roles and unequal power relations

People are socialized into gender roles from birth. Traditional gender roles force specific roles, dispositions and behaviours on both female and males. According to Adams *et al*; (2000) when a child is born, the first question people ask is whether the child is a boy or a girl. People want to know the baby's gender, not its sexual orientation. Lees says that based on the gender of the child, people have preconceptions about the entire life of that individual, and if the individual does not conform to the expectations of being a boy or a girl / a man or a woman (the two standard genders), it will inevitably face many difficulties, challenges and hardships.

Males are encouraged to be independent, competitive, goal-orientated, unemotional, and to value physical courage and roughness; while females are encouraged to be nurturing, emotional, sensitive, expressive, and to be caretakers of others, often expected to put these before their own needs (Adams *et al*, 2000). Those who do not act in line with gender stereotypes are bullied. In many cultures boys are stereotyped as sporty, strong decision makers and not overly emotional or sensitive. As a result boys who show feelings or who are too intimate with other boys run the risk of being labelled homosexuals by their peers. Girls who are viewed as boyish or who hold feminist views run the risk of being labelled lesbian. In "Western culture, the concepts of masculinity and femininity promote the dominion of males

over females and reinforce the identification of maleness with power” (Adams *et al*, 2000, 277). From birth boys are given more privileges than girls. At home they are socialized into thinking that they are stronger than girls and they are given hard work to do. If they do not comply with the expectations placed on all males in society, mechanisms exist which are intended to facilitate and encourage, and often force collusion and conforming to these gender roles and expectations. In the early stages of a boy’s life, the parents and immediate family will teach, guide and discipline boys into fitting in with the expected roles and behaviours associated with the dominant gender group. Likewise, girls are socialised to be obedient and subordinate and there are definite rewards and punishments in place to ensure that girls comply with the expectations placed on their gender. Socialization according to strict gender roles serves to maintain the sexist structure of society and the unequal power relations between the two gender groups.

When investigating heterosexism as a form of oppression, it is necessary to take into account traditional gender roles. Socialisation according to male and female roles "locks all people into rigid gender-based roles" (Adams *et al*, 2000, 271). If a person is categorised as either male or female, there leaves little room for any deviation from belonging to one of two social groups. Any deviation from the norm of traditional gender roles results in heterosexism and homophobia, where homosexuals fall into the subordinate group and heterosexuals comprise the dominant social group. "Gays and lesbians have been beaten, raped, tortured or murdered because they are not just exactly like some ideal to which everyone is expected to conform" (Adams *et al*, 2000, 304).

Differentiation between dominant and subordinate social groups on a societal, institutional or individual level, results in the perpetuation of a system of unequal power relations within society. Differentiation separates people into categories of dominance and privilege, subordination and powerlessness. Homophobia is a form of oppression and a mechanism of control and power which serves to reinforce gender specific roles. One example of ways that people are punished for non-conformity by stepping "outside designated gender roles" is the labelling of homosexuals as "faggots, dykes, and homos" (Adams *et al*, 2000, 271).

An obvious mechanism and strategy of oppression in any society or community is the domination and imposition of the culture and norms of the dominant group. The ideal of assimilation rests on the assumption of hegemony and pressurizes all members of both

dominant and subordinate groups to collude, conform, identify with, and become a part of the system wherein the dominant group's culture and norms prevail as powerful. The collusion and conforming to dominant group membership ensures acceptance, while not conforming and not colluding leads to marginalization and alienation, discrimination and oppression.

The conceptual model developed by Hardiman and Jackson (1997) includes a definition of unequal power relations or oppression in which individuals play dominant or subordinate social roles, as oppressor or oppressed, agents or targets. Within this model of oppression, social oppression is understood as involving systemic ideological control and domination, which results in the condition of dominance, superiority, benefit and privilege for agent group members and that of subordination, inferiority, disenfranchisement, marginalization and discrimination of target group members. This forms the basis of a generic model of social oppression, which includes seeing the dominant or oppressor social group as the agent of oppression, and the subordinate or oppressed social group as the target of oppression (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997).

According to Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) model of oppression, in each case of social identity, there is an agent group considered dominant (systemically advantaged and privileged) and a target group considered subordinate (systemically disadvantaged, marginalized and discriminated against). Unequal and hierarchical power relationships almost always result in the dominant or privileged groups benefiting from the disempowerment of subordination of targeted groups. Members of the agent group are dominant, powerful, superior, advantaged, privileged, independent and autonomous. The agent group has the power to define the world and the way things are or should be, define the rules and the roles that different individuals and social groups should play, determine what is 'normal', construct knowledge, set standards, name what is acceptable and appropriate, and reject what is not, name the inferior, inappropriate and unacceptable and set themselves up as the norm that all people should be aspiring to. Target groups, on the other hand, are subordinate, powerless, inferior, disadvantaged, marginalized, and dependant on the standards and norms which are set and defined by the agents groups. Unequal social relations of power result in oppression.

"We are born into a specific set of social identities, which predispose us to unequal roles in the dynamic system of oppression" (Harro, 2000, 15). Whether one is a target or an agent is determined by the social group an individual is identified with and with which an individual

identifies him/herself with. Adams *et al* (2000) draw attention to the negative stigmas and stereotypes that have been attached to homosexuality and people who are identified with and who identify themselves with this subordinate and target social group; how negative attitudes internalized by members of these groups often damage the spirit and stifle emotional growth; and, how homophobia serves the dominant group by maintaining power over target group members who are rejected, isolated, marginalized and disenfranchised.

2.6. Levels of oppression

Hardiman and Jackson (1997) suggest that social oppression is maintained and operationalised at the following levels: societal/cultural structures, institutional level, and individual level. Definitions of good, normal, healthy and deviant serve as the basis of providing individuals, institutions, societies and cultures with the motivation and rationale for social oppression (for example, gays and lesbians are seen as 'sick' or 'dirty'). The family, schools and churches comprise the institutional level of oppression when they reinforce beliefs and behaviours that are discriminatory and oppressive.

2.6.1. *Families' attitudes towards homosexuality and homosexual parenting*

In sharing memories and reflections on her childhood, Lim-Hing (in Adams *et al*, 2000) reports that issues of sexuality were not willingly or openly dealt with in her family and raises the important point that if conversations about sexuality is taboo in certain families, then it would not be a surprise that other forms of sexuality are also ignored and not discussed openly. When she had the courage to be honest about her sexual orientation as a lesbian, the implicit message her family gave her was not so much condemnation, as a plea to keep this a secret. She complied with her family's request to keep up the face of 'normality' and keep her lesbian identity a secret, and waited until she had moved out of home and far enough away from the family to begin acting on her sexual desires, at which point her immediate family and some relatives stopped including her in family gatherings and occasions. It was clear to Lim-Hing that having a gay or lesbian in the family was shameful.

Epstein is a professor in the Department of Social Science at Cardiff University, Wales, UK, and has developed educational centres in schools and at Cardiff University promoting a culture of inclusion and acceptance for gays and lesbians. Drawing from a project researching gender

and sexuality in South African schools in the context of HIV/AIDS, Epstein (1994) reports that when a particular youth spoke to her father about her sexual preference, her father said that he didn't think his daughter was a lesbian, but that it was just a passing phase, something that would not last in his daughter's feelings. Epstein (1994) states that some parents have adverse reactions because they fear that the negative stereotypes so often applied to lesbians would be applied to the rest of their own children. Epstein further reports that one particular lesbian's mother was afraid that the whole family would see her daughter's lesbianism as a corrupt influence. She feared that once they found out about her daughter's lesbianism they would not let her near their children. According to Epstein's research, such parental reactions put great stress on young lesbians, especially if they are still dependent in one way or another on their families.

Blumenfeld is the editor of the *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*. His research interests are in multicultural education, queer studies, special education, educational psychology, social identities and the way these affect education outcomes with a strong emphasis on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. According to Blumenfeld societal homophobia prevents families from living in harmony and 26 percent of homosexual youth are forced to leave home because of conflicts over their sexual orientation (Adams *et al*, 2000).

Luirink (1998) cites many examples of various forms of punishment and victimization that homosexuals endure as a result of their families' negative attitudes and behaviour towards them, and adds that such negative attitudes can cause family members to turn against each other, and often result in feelings of betrayal, rejection and shame on the part of gays and lesbians.

Although women are generally considered by some to be good at nurturing children, when it comes to the issues of lesbian parents, people are often not in favour of lesbians rearing children at all (Sanger and Clowes, 2006). According to Sanger and Clowes' (2006) research on the views and perceptions of people in relation to lesbianism, several people raised the notion that children of lesbian parents could be victimized and that children out of such marriages will be embarrassed and will go through burdened with the stigmatization that accompanies homosexuality. The argument is that though the child is loved and supported, there will be embarrassing moments when he or she has to disclose that s/he has a mother and a mother, because children can often be extremely cruel (Sanger and Clowes, 2006).

Heterosexuals' arrangements for rearing children are considered better than even heterosexual relationships where abuse occurs towards children, simply because they are welcomed as normal. One participant from Sanger and Clowes' (2006) research argued that it is not moral for lesbian couples to rear children. She further stated that God's intention is for children to be reared in an environment where both parents are present (father and mother), and that lesbianism does not fit into God's plans.

Gloria Jean Watkins, known in American literature by her pen name 'bell hooks', is an author, feminist and social activist on issues of race, class and gender, who writes of their ability to produce and perpetuate systems of oppression and domination (Adams *et al*, 2000). According to hooks, (in Adams *et al*, 2000) homophobia directed at lesbians is fixed in the deep religious and moral belief that women show their womanliness by having children. The prevailing assumption is that to be a lesbian is 'unnatural' because lesbians cannot participate in child-bearing.

2.6.2. Schools' attitudes to homosexuality

Gays and lesbians are often not noticeable because of the stigma attached to their identification as sexual minorities and are ignored and overlooked by the institutions charged with facilitating their education and often, actively ignored by educators (Sears, 1989). This sentiment is echoed by one participant from Epstein's research (1994) who believed the worst aspect of his school days was the complete and utter absence of any mention at school, at home, in literature, in media of lesbians and gay men. According to Epstein (1994) little has been done to support gay and lesbian learners in schools. Schools are a microcosm of society at large, and learners who do not conform to the expected norms often find themselves discriminated against. Epstein (1994) states that schools tend not to deal openly with issues relating to lesbian and gay sexuality.

Blumenfeld reports that in a Massachusetts study, 97 percent of high school students heard homophobic remarks from other students at school, and 53 percent reported hearing these remarks from school staff. Blumenfeld indicates that in the USA 28 percent of LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) students drop out of high school (Adams *et al*, 2000).

According to Epstein (1994) the Education Act, No. 2 of 1986 of the United States of America, gave school governors at the University of New Mexico the duty to lay down laws on sex education policies. However, they were not well informed about commitment to equal opportunities, policies and practices, and were therefore unlikely to adopt sex education policies which challenged the prevailing heterosexism in schools. Epstein (1994) reports that during the time they spend at school, most gays and lesbians keep quiet about their sexuality. Those few who happen to be open about their sexual orientation experience hostility. Epstein (1994) further states that some teachers stop gays and lesbians who talk about their sexuality in front of others, saying that gay and lesbian students are upsetting others.

Campos' (2005) research interest is in understanding gay and lesbian youth. He assists classroom teachers, schools, councillors and administrators in relating to gay and lesbian youth and creating accepting and supporting learning climates, while providing practical strategies for working affectively with these students. According to Campos (2005) gay and lesbian youth have not been accepted and supported in schools, despite their increasing numbers. Campos reports that one distressing story after another was heard during youth interviews in schools. One student, who was perceived to be gay, was chased by a group of boys and threatened with physical harm. When he found shelter in a classroom, the assistant principal laughed at him and told him that he was blowing the incident out of proportion. Another assistant principal demanded that the boy act more like a man, while a teacher ridiculed a lesbian student (Campos, 2005).

Campos (2005) states that one North Carolina High School principal took down the campaign posters of a newly, openly gay student in an attempt to stop the youth running for student body president. At one school, personnel were not allowed to raise relationship and dating issues in class, and anything associated with homosexuality was ignored and silenced. According to Campos (2005), gay and lesbian students were generally harassed and rejected. Furthermore, they had no support, network or outlet of any kind, and they had no access to information on gay and lesbian issues. Gay and lesbian youth had nowhere to turn and their needs remained unmet. Campos notes that the knowledge which school personnel possess on the subject of homosexuality is often based on inadequate or inaccurate information, myths and stereotypes. Campos (2005) sees a need for the communities to safeguard the wellbeing of gays and lesbians so that they become part of their communities, instead of being alienated, ostracised, harassed and marginalized.

According to Campos (2005), in 2002 some school personnel reported being apprehensive about the diverse sexual orientation amongst the students in their school. One school in Florida called homosexuality "a sin" and emphasised that they would oppose any curriculum that promoted or condoned a homosexual lifestyle (Campos, 2005, 3). Campos (2005) reports that most people live in heterosexist societies, which means that they live in societies where everyone is assumed and expected to be heterosexual. Campos (2005) adds that schools' personnel and students expect to see "heterosexual couples in the hallways, talk openly about heterosexual relationships, and assume that students will conform to gender-appropriate clothes and behaviour, participate in gender appropriate sports teams and so forth" (Campos, 2005, 3). It is therefore not expected to see homosexual couples at the prom and everyone assumes that boys would run for prom king and girls for prom queen. It is clear that school policies do not address gay and lesbian youth. There is no mention of gay and lesbian issues in the curriculum, and no magazines for and about the gay and lesbian community are found in the school library. Campos (2005) stresses that it is important for schools to support gay and lesbian youth in order to establish equality.

Richardson (2006) notes that a study conducted by Butler, Alpansan, Strumpher and Astbury (2003) analyzed the coming out narratives of 18 gay and lesbian South African youth. According to their findings, the presence of LGBT youth are ignored by teachers, and South African schools do little to "validate their lives, to challenge heteronormativity, or to discourage the vilification of homosexuals" (Richardson, 2006, 136). According to research conducted by the Human Rights Watch and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights commission (2003), one participant reported being suspended from school when her teacher found out that she was a lesbian. What is a concern is that "there are no educational policies requiring that schools become "safe places" for LGBT youth or that teacher education or the school curriculum addresses issues relating to sexual diversity" (Richardson, 2006, 137).

2.6.3. *The attitude of the church*

Historically human sexuality has been regarded as problematic by theologians and the South African churches working within the Christian tradition (Germond and Gruchy, 1997). Traditional Christian teaching has viewed sexuality as a threat to the spiritual life and practice of Christians and throughout the centuries Christian theologians have tried to devise various

strategies to contain the danger to which human sexuality exposes the Christian soul and restrict sexual practice. The issue of human sexuality is more complex for the South African churches than for their first world counterparts, because South Africa has inherited Western problematic attitudes towards sexuality as well as African ones. This leaves the church in South Africa struggling for consensus and churches are divided over the issues of homosexuality and Christian ethics and morality. There are those who oppose homosexuality and consider it a sin, on the one hand, and, on the other, there are those who are supportive of homosexuality, viewing it simply as one of the natural God-created diversities among people.

It is expected that people will interpret the bible differently (Germond and Gruchy, 1997). The first and most obvious account in the bible – that of Adam and Eve - leads a majority of Christians to conclude that it is only people of the opposite sex who qualify to indulge in a sexual relationship with each other. According to Germond and Gruchy (1997) when examining the position of the church in South Africa on human sexuality, heterosexism is upheld as normative for most Christians. The ability of the church to deal with the crisis of homosexuality is restricted by the conservatism of their members. Germond and Gruchy (1997) suggest that rather than discussing issues of sexuality and the status of homosexuality within the church and Christianity, emphasis should be on discussion *with* homosexuals rather than *about* them. Germond and Gruchys' (1997) study explores and challenges the prejudice and discrimination that gay and lesbian people experience within South Africa churches. Drawing from a broad and diverse base of data generated, their analysis suggests that the problem the church faces is not homosexuality but heterosexism – the practice that assumes heterosexuality is normative and homosexuality a perversion.

Religious culture and the attitude of the Church have a great impact on homophobia within communities, especially within black communities, where religious beliefs are widely and deeply engrained in everyday life. Some churches believe that being gay and lesbian is sinful because they insist that the Bible emphasizes that homosexuality is unnatural and immoral. Most Christian churches believe that homosexuality is sinful and an abomination in the eyes of God (Vermeulen, 2008). Statements such as the following are not uncommon in local newspapers in South Africa: "Homosexuality is far more of an abomination in the eyes of God than rape. Rape is unlawful sexual intercourse. Homosexuality is unnatural and unlawful sexual intercourse. It is far better for a virgin to suffer rape, than for one to engage in homosexuality - even voluntarily" (Maogi, 2004, 36).

The notion of homosexuality is clearly seen as deviant, as a sin and as unAfrican, and gays and lesbians in South Africa often face a conflict between their homosexuality and religious beliefs, and are at risk of religious discrimination. According to Kheswa and Wieringa's research (2005), churches often view homosexuals as possessed by evil spirits, believing that a person cannot be homosexual and serve God simultaneously. Such stances within the church therefore promote stigmatisation, discrimination and prejudice against homosexuals (Vermeulen, 2008). Gays and lesbians are thus manipulated, in the sense that the church attempts to change their sexual orientation through religious therapies and fear of the devil or evil (Vermeulen, 2008).

While the Dutch Reformed Church supported both gay and straight unions, the Roman Catholic Church took a stand to separate acts to distinguish heterosexual "marriages" from homosexual "civil unions" (Saville and Sapa, 2006). Afrem Tresoldi, a spokesman for the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops Conference (2005) reported that the church would continue to lobby against same sex marriages on moral grounds. The Lutheran Church of South Africa stands by the doctrine that marriage is between a male and a female, and the beliefs that homosexuality is against the will of God, homosexuals are considered sinners, and, the Church could not compromise and accept such things (Saville and Sapa, 2006).

Rev. Dr. F. Deacon (in Adams *et al*, 2000) takes a liberal stand against homosexuality and challenges his followers with regard to homophobic religious beliefs. Deacon makes the point that it is all an issue of interpretation of the biblical passages and whether one's faith is a living, dynamic one, or whether it simply comprises rules and formulas. Deacon quotes the book of Leviticus 18:13, verses 22-23 and states that this is the chapter that has troubled homosexual people so much. This text calls for the death penalty for homosexual acts. Deacon adds that the same book of Leviticus prohibits the eating of rabbit, oysters, clams, shrimp and pork (Leviticus 21). Deacon questions why two verses in Leviticus are still considered valid when much in the same book is not.

The story of Sodom (Genesis 19: 4-11) is often cited as proof that God is against homosexuality. Deacon (in Adams *et al*, 2000) offers a different interpretation and understanding of this biblical account by explaining that the story of Sodom is one of a mobilisation of the ancient values of hospitality towards two angelic visitors to their city, in the

form of an attempted homosexual rape. Deacon reports that in the books of Ezekiel 16: 49, Isaiah 1: 9-17 and 3: 9-15 and Jeremiah 23:14, the sins of Sodom are described as arrogance, adultery, lies, insincere religious practices, oppression of the poor, and neglect of the fatherless and widows. Deacon makes the point that homosexuality is not mentioned, but that so much inhospitality has been practiced against homosexuals based on these passages.

In the book of Romans 1: 26-32, Deacon says Saint Paul believed homosexual acts to be unnatural. Deacon challenges this interpretation by highlighting that Saint Paul viewed *all* sexuality with fear and disapproval, urging those who could to abstain. According to Deacon (in Adams *et al*, 2000), much of Paul's writing on social issues has little bearing on modern society. An example he offers is that Paul also commands women to be silent and not to teach men in the church. This standpoint is clearly not applicable to present day modern society where women are encouraged to have an equal voice and enjoy full and equal participation in all matters, including those of the church. Deacon believes that there are those who single out homosexual people for special abuse, but they miss the main point of the Bible as a whole (Deacon, in Adams *et al*, 2000).

Against a predominant tide of religious homophobia where most churches deny homosexuality, Deacon is one of a few voices which challenge this belief. Sanger and Clowes (2006) argue that the Hope Unity Metropolitan Church in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, played an essential role in the struggle against homophobia by claiming that homosexuality is God-given. Former head of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu, is another such voice. He has been quoted as saying that, "A parent who brings up a child to be racist damages that child, damages the community in which they live, damages our hope for a better world. A parent who teaches a child that there is only one sexual orientation and that anything else is evil denies our humanity and their own too" (Sanger and Clowes, 2006, 38).

2.7. Hate-crimes against homosexuals

Violence is often used as a weapon of intimidation and oppression by those who oppress and those who fail to recognize others as human beings despite their differences. Gays and lesbians often live under threats of violence and have historically encountered frequent and shocking physical violence. According to Freire (1996) it is not those who are oppressed, unrecognized and helpless who initiate violence, but the oppressors, and it is not the despised

that initiate hatred, but those who despise others. The social power of the dominant social group (heterosexuals) creates the concrete situations which favour their dominance and superiority (Freire, 1996). Homophobia and hate-crimes against homosexuals fails to recognize gays and lesbians as human beings worthy of rights, respect and fair and equal treatment and opportunities. Sadly, such violence is often exercised by those who are supposed to be protecting victims, such as police officers.

According to Adams *et al* (2000), hate-motivated violence against homosexuals is on the rise. He cites numerous accounts of hate-crimes against gays. In one instance in the USA two men bludgeoned a thirty-nine year old gay man to death with an axe handle, and threw his body onto a pyre of burning flames. Another incident happened where a transgender person was gang-raped and when the victim reported the incident to local police, police officials discounted his story. Thereafter, the perpetrators entered the victim's home and murdered him (Adams *et al*, 2000). In October 1998, two young men put a twenty-one year old gay college student at the University of Wyoming into the boot of their car and drove him to a remote spot on the Wyoming prairie, pistol-whipped him and shattered his skull. They then tied him, still alive, to a wooden fence, where he was bound for over eight hours in near freezing temperatures. The victim never gained consciousness and died six days later. Even following his death, the hatred continued. Reverend Fred Phelps and his followers protested at the victim's funeral, claiming that God had punished him for being gay.

These are only the more high-profile examples of hate-related violence directed against homosexual people. It is a fact that most anti-gay crimes go unreported because homosexuals fear harassment from the authorities (D'Augelli, 1989). Such hate crimes are a clear message to all homosexual people that tolerance for those who do not conform to ordinary societal norms is not a given, and that it is possibly better to never 'come out' and announce their homosexuality.

The Guardian, 12 March 2009, reported the shocking death of Eudy Simelane, a former South African media star. Her body was found in Kwa Thema, an area on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Simelane was gang raped and brutally beaten, before being stabbed twenty five times in the face, chest and legs. Simelane was known as the first woman to live openly as a lesbian in Kwa Thema and was a passionate equal rights campaigner (Xling li, 2009)

Since then the tide of violent hate-crimes against lesbians in South African townships has continued to rise, especially violent attacks that are called 'corrective rape' committed by men in the endeavour of 'curing' lesbians of their deviant sexual orientation (Xingling, 2009). When such crimes are reported, nothing is done to punish and correct the behaviour of the men perpetrating these rapes. Lesbians in townships throughout South Africa are reported to be living under the everyday threat of being deliberately targeted and raped. Xingling (2009) notes that lesbians are not free to be who they want to be and to move around freely as lesbians. They are restricted and live in constant danger and fear of violence. These 'corrective' rapes can be seen as yet another manifestation of violence against women, the most widespread human rights violation in the world today. These crimes continue unabated, while authorities simply turn a blind eye.

Although South Africa has one of the most progressive Constitutions in the world, with regard to gay lesbian rights, these democratic and inclusive practices are not often a reality in the South African legal system. Hate-crimes against lesbian women are being overlooked. The effects of sexual violence have been widely felt within black lesbian communities in South Africa where a large number of lesbian women have fallen victim to hate-crimes and violent sexual attacks. This has resulted in numerous deaths of active and young lesbian women who have died from AIDS-related complications (Muholi, 2004). Fear and forced silence among black lesbians has led many to remain voiceless about their sexuality and experiences of victimization and oppression. Matabeni (2007) believes that efforts should be put in place to help black lesbians in South Africa claim their space and talk about their sexuality in gatherings without fear of being further victimized.

Action Aid Women's Rights group has encouraged the South African government to put a stop to these crimes against women and fulfil the promises of the Constitution. The report of Action Aids Women's Rights (12 March 2009) noted that out of every 25 men accused of rape in South Africa, 24 walk free, because hate-crimes on the basis of sexual orientation are not recognised by South African law and the court refuses to recognise that it plays any part in these cases (Xingling, 2009).

Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Massooa were two lesbians who were gang raped and shot near their homes in Meadowlands, Soweto in July 2007. The failure of the police to follow up eyewitness statements and undergo a thorough investigation into this brutal double rape and

murder has led to the formation of the 07-07-07 campaign, a coalition of human rights and equality groups seeking justice for women.

The rise of hate-crimes against homosexuals in South Africa is sparking the interest and passion of various human rights groups. It is clear that the South African government has not prioritised sexual harassment crimes as a special project. This is a grave concern of human rights groups and support groups. Action Aid (12 March 2009) reported that this shameful record of violence against women has resulted in an increasing brutal and oppressive culture, wherein women are forced to conform or suffer consequences. The report highlighted that this escalation of hate-crimes directed against lesbian women stems from lesbianism being perceived as a direct threat to a male dominated society (Xingling, 2009).

2.8. Youth at risk

According to Erickson (1950), the primary psychological task of adolescence is that of identity formation. Acceptance and validation is fundamentally important to the development of autonomy and self-esteem for youth in general. Conformity brings acceptance, while being different, especially stigmatised differences, result in alienation and a realisation of 'otherness' on the part of the developing adolescent. If social relations do not nurture the positive development of the self, then healthy consolidation of identity is hindered. Self-actualisation and psychological integrity for the homosexual adolescent, are therefore severely inhibited (Malyon, 1982). The socialised predisposition of heterosexism and homophobia militates against healthy identity formation. The socialisation of the homosexual individual is nearly always an internalisation of current social attitudes towards homosexuality. This internalised homophobia necessarily influences identity formation, self-esteem, patterns of cognition and psychological integrity, and contributes to a tendency towards enormous inner conflicts, guilt and self-punishment for homosexual youth.

According to Hardiman and Jackson (1997) oppression exists when certain key elements are in place. These include harassment, discrimination, marginalization and other forms of differential and unequal treatment. Along with being defined as 'other', there are a number of structural and material constraints and restrictions placed on deviant or subordinate groups that significantly shape their life chances and sense of possibility (resulting in restricted self-development and self-determination). Restricted self-development and self-determination

prevents homosexuals from participating actively and fully in life, whether this be accessing the full range of opportunities available, reaching their full potential, or participating equally with others as full and valued partners in social interaction. This is what Fraser *et al* (2007, 161) calls “parity of participation”. Such restraints and restrictions indicate the presence of oppression.

Homosexuals are often negatively viewed and labelled by heterosexuals. They are also subject to oppressive treatment such as prejudice, harassment, discrimination, marginalisation and alienation. As a result of this negative differential and unequal treatment, homosexuals often lack self-esteem and may decide to hide their true identity and sexual orientation from the world for fear of being targeted and oppressed. As a result of not being able to participate actively and fully in the world, it is therefore often difficult for them to follow a natural course of self-development and self-determination. According to Savin-Williams (1998) fear is something that the majority of homosexuals encounter – fear of harassment, fear of prejudice, fear of discrimination, fear of marginalisation, fear of alienation.

Oppression is not only an external phenomenon, existing through social institutions and norms. It also exists within the human psyche or individual consciousness of each target or victim. This happens when prejudicial and discriminatory beliefs are internalized by target group members. Internalized subordination occurs when gays and lesbians accept the attitudes and beliefs that are used to justify their inferiority and deviance as correct and valid. “Psychological colonization of the target group occurs through socializing the oppressed to internalize their oppressed condition and collude with the oppressor’s ideology and social system” (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, 17). Oppression involves a relationship between an agent or dominant social group and a target or subordinate social group that keeps the system of domination and hierarchical power relations in place. Members of the target group often collude either unwillingly and unconsciously, or willingly and consciously. Their collusion is the “result of agents taking control over time of the institutions of a society, as well as the minds, ideology, language, culture and history of the targets” (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, 17). The temptation to collude with the dominant group ensures the privilege and acceptance that members of the dominant social groups experience.

Hardiman and Jackson (1997) contend that the system of oppression (in this case, heterosexism), once in place, is self-perpetuating. Men and women are socialized by powerful

sources in the world to play roles prescribed by an inequitable social system (Harro, 2000). To maintain the status quo, both genders are systematically trained and socialized in 'how to be' a male or a female social identity throughout their lives. Heterosexuals (agents), through socialization see themselves as 'normal', 'correct' and 'appropriate', whereas homosexuals (targets) are labelled 'abnormal', 'deviant', 'substandard', and 'defective'. The belief that heterosexuality is 'normal' and the 'appropriate' sexual orientation, while homosexuality is 'abnormal', 'deviant' and an 'inappropriate' sexual orientation, can be internalized by both heterosexuals and homosexuals (Adams *et al*, 1997). Oppression is thus perpetuated from generation to generation. Oppression that remains long enough becomes so embedded and definitive of all peoples' ways of life that those who are oppressed often simply accept it, and cannot imagine breaking away or recovering from it. These processes of internalized domination and subordination keep the system of domination in place, thus maintaining the status quo.

This internalised subordination is what Freire (1996) refers to as "the tragic dilemma of the oppressed". Targets and victims of oppression are so used to being prescribed to and having the dominant social group's choices and definitions imposed on them, that their very consciousness is shaped and dominated by the agent group or oppressor. Internalized subordination occurs when the oppressed have adapted to the structure of domination in which they have been immersed and have become resigned to their deviant and inferior place and their role in the world, believing themselves to be powerless to change or transform their reality and experiences. They therefore often express fatalistic attitudes to their situation. Oppression thus functions to domesticate and subordinate, thus suppressing the liberatory consciousness of the oppressed. It is in the interest of heterosexuals (agents) to hold homosexuals (targets) in a position of fatalism, powerlessness and dependence, as this ensures the perpetuation of the status quo.

Most children internalise society's ideology of sex and gender at an early age (Adams *et al*, 2000). It is often not until the adolescent era that distinct and conscious homosexual desires become manifest and that the potential for homosexual self-recognition evolves. The subjective realisation of a homosexual identity is however, preceded by years of homophobic bias. Homosexuals inevitably experience some degree of negative feelings towards themselves when they first realise their homosexuality in adolescence. This sequence of developmental events thus contaminates the process of adolescent identity formation, the internalisation of

homophobic partiality rendering homosexual desire unacceptable even before the process of attribution begins (Malyan, 1982). This internalised homophobia often makes the process of healthy identity formation more difficult for individuals with homosexual tendencies (Adams *et al*, 2000). If 'fitting in' is so important to the process of identity formation, adolescent homosexuals are often encouraged to obtain peer-group and social validation through the development of a false identity – a heterosexual identity which is what is seen and taught as acceptable and appropriate. The homosexual adolescent therefore may feel under pressure to suppress and deny any homosexual tendencies or inclinations, for fear of the alienation of being seen as "other". Conformity to role expectations consistent with prevailing heterosexual norms therefore precludes psychological integrity (Malyan, 1982), as it results in a fragmentation of self-concept and identity formation. Maintaining a false identity is inevitably accompanied by intense anxiety, despair and inner conflict. The profound alienation, loneliness and self-contempt engendered by the homophobic ethos has profoundly negative psychological and emotional implications. While not all individuals are affected to the same degree or in the same way by cultural influences, the psychological and social consequences of a biased socialisation can be very potent. Adams *et al* (2000) believe that individuals with a homosexual orientation who have not yet 'come out' and who are isolated from an LGB community, may experience greater psychological distress than those who have had the courage and support to be open and honest about their sexual orientation.

The already complex task of identity formation is thus further complicated for the homosexual adolescent by the conflict between cultural expectations and deviant psychosexual inclinations. Anti-homosexual socialisation and homophobic attitudes bias the psychological development of gays and lesbians. The healthy formation of identity is negatively affected by heterosexual socialisation, and there are bound to be psychological effects and even clinical issues of such a biased process of socialisation.

Adams *et al* (2000) note that because of heterosexism many individuals feel compelled to hide homosexuality or to pass themselves off as heterosexual but this involves denying their feelings of being homosexual. These findings show that in the USA, between 23% and 40% of homosexual participants had not told their families that they were gay, and between 37 and 59% had not disclosed their sexual orientation to co-workers. The reality of unfair discrimination and lack of acceptance by prejudiced heterosexuals of any sexual orientation which falls outside the accepted norms of society is often a powerful motivation for gays and lesbians to

hide their sexual orientation and wear the mask of heterosexuality. This in turn, creates stress and may even lead to suicide. The fear of being rejected and not accepted for who one is, is a powerful mechanism for perpetuating the norm in terms of sexual identities and orientation, but one that has extremely dangerous effects on gays and lesbians. Living a lie and leading an unauthentic life necessarily impacts negatively on individuals' identity development, personal well-being and sense of self-esteem.

Those individuals who have not yet 'come out' as gay or lesbian, but are passing themselves off as heterosexual, must actively hide or deny their sexual orientation and homosexual relationships to family and friends. This is very likely to disrupt long-standing family relationships and friendships as lesbians and gays necessarily withdraw and distance themselves from others to avoid revealing their sexual orientation. They may keep their interactions at a superficial level as a self-protective strategy. In addition, pretending to be heterosexual creates considerable strain for lesbian and gay partnerships (Adams *et al*, 2000).

Clark is an American writer, teacher, consultant, and clinical psychologist, who has specialised in group and individual work with gay people since 1968. He is the author of books, 'Loving Someone Gay', 'Living Gay' and 'As We Are', and has served as a member of the Gay Right Advocates, as a fellow of the American Psychological Association, and as a Californian State Board of Psychology Commissioner, among other roles. According to Clark (1997), most gay children do their best to hide their developing erotic orientation which is a vital part of themselves. Clark (1997) reports that in societies that consider homosexuality as bad, wrong, evil or inferior, there is no chance of a gay child's identity developing in a healthy way. Clark reports that gays and lesbians "sometimes try to imitate the oppressor so as to gain mainstream acceptance, but that this develops misshapen self-concepts" (Clark, 1997, 25). Clark (1997) notes that because homosexuals often live in societies that teach them to be rude and hate themselves, lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youths attempt suicide more frequently than their heterosexual counterparts.

Herek is the author of articles which provide overviews of studies which show the particular effects hate crimes have on their victims. Adams *et al* (2000) state that when heterosexism is expressed through overt hostility and attacks, it creates additional psychological challenges for homosexual people. Being the target of discrimination often leads to prolonged feelings of

sadness and anxiety which can lead to an increased sense that life is difficult and unfair, and to dissatisfaction with one's community.

2.9. 'Coming out' - breaking the silence

The terms 'in the closet' or 'closeted' refer to the phenomenon of individuals hiding their homosexual tendencies and preferences and passing themselves off as heterosexuals (Adams *et al*, 2000, 281). The term 'coming out of the closet' therefore refers to individuals having the courage and the support to decide to no longer pretend to be heterosexual, but instead to openly acknowledge that they are gay or lesbian.

Adams *et al* (2000) state that throughout the world, issues related to homosexuality are increasing. Homosexuals are openly admitting their sexual orientation or 'coming out of closet'. Young people with sexual orientations other than the accepted norm in society are seen to be developing positive identities at earlier ages than ever before. Presently in academic circles, greater emphasis and discussions are touching on "queer theory", where writers, educators, and students are analysing the current notions and categories of sexuality and gender (Adams *et al*, 2000, 261).

Drum Magazine in South Africa ran an article on one of the wedding shows that was broadcast on SABC TV, where two gay men were getting married. Although the article reported that there was an indignant minority of viewers who regarded the whole business as a "sordid abomination" (Zulu, 2004), this television show is evidence of the increasing visibility of gays and lesbians breaking the silence and publicly committing to homosexual lifestyles.

Savin-Williams is a Professor of Developmental Psychology in the Department of Human Development at Cornell University, and a clinical psychologist who works with gay youths and their families. The personal narratives of sexual-minority youths reported in his 1998 book '...And Then I Became Gay', illustrate their experiences of growing up gay or bisexual during the present historic time and within the North American culture. "The stories may very well illuminate developmental processes that fundamentally characterize the human life course among sexual-minority individuals who in their developmental trajectories, are both like and unlike heterosexuals and similar to and dissimilar to all other gays, bisexuals, and lesbians" (Savin-Williams, 1998, 2).

This book illustrates two very important points. The first refers to the presence of sexuality among children and adolescents. Savin-Williams states that gay and lesbian children and adolescents have sexual fantasies and many engage in homosexual behaviour long before they understand the meaning of a gay or bisexual identity. Secondly, the youths report that no one had ever made them gay or lesbian, but that their homosexual attractions emerged early and forcefully, sometimes giving impetus to homosexual behaviour. Savin-Williams (1998) states that all participants reported feeling fearful when considering revealing their social identity to their parents, friends and relatives, and were often anxious that they would not be accepted by their family and community.

Some of his participants reported that gay communities helped them evolve a positive gay identity. What was most helpful in joining a gay community was exposure to positive role models, thereby countering stereotypes that all gay men are sick, weird, or sexually promiscuous. Experiencing these different gay persons, facilitated the realization that they were not sick or bizarre and that being gay might not be as problematic as initially thought. "Now for the first time he had an option, whereas before he had not" (Savin-Williams, 1998, 59).

Savin-Williams (1998) states that many other youths appreciate the diversity evident within gay communities. One participant said "it was the reassurance that he needed" (Savin-Williams, 1998, 59). Most people try to force themselves to be what they are not, to live like other people and deny their desire and sexual fantasies of the same sex. Savin-Williams reports that being gay is not something these particular youths had planned or would have selected and had even made attempts during their childhood and adolescence to convince themselves that it was not possible to be gay. When they finally stopped conforming to society's norms and accepted that they were gay, they experienced some sort of peace. Savin-Williams (1998) states that gay and lesbian people want to live a better and easier life, one where they can exercise freedom of choice in matters of sexuality and sexual preference and orientation. Once his participants had submitted to and accepted a gay life, they increasingly experienced happiness and self-acceptance.

According to Adams *et al* (2000), most heterosexuals may think that they accept and understand the culture of gays and lesbians. Adams *et al* (2000) relate the story of an administrator at the University of Rutgers who found himself deeply disturbed by homosexuals

unwittingly. Reports of attacks on people who were thought to be, or who actually admitted to being homosexuals disturbed him deeply (Adams *et al*, 2000). The administrator had given no credence to the argument that to talk about homosexuality is to promote homosexuality, and had disagreed with the notion that to love someone of the same sex is unnatural and therefore to be condemned. The administrator did not think he had joined in any way in the hostile chorus directed against this human difference. Adams *et al* (2000) state that the administrator discovered himself mistaken. Sometimes, heterosexuals are annoyed by those gay and lesbian members of the gay community whom heterosexuals thought they are exaggerating their sexual orientation. The administrator valued privacy and thought that it was good for gays and lesbians to keep their sex lives private, and not to tell everyone about their sexuality. He further questioned why some gays and lesbians wanted to foreground and draw attention to their sexuality and said that he would have preferred silence.

The administrator was helped by some students who were members and leaders of the Rutgers University Lesbian and Gay (RULG) to learn and understand about homosexual issues. They helped him see that to stay silent is not good as it does not provide opportunity to share and learn about unity and equal treatment. Adams *et al* (2000) argue that the constructions of homosexuality in the minds of heterosexuals may explain why some would prefer that gay people remain 'in the closet' or at least stay silent about it. "If we don't talk about it we can all be normal" (Adams *et al*, 2000, 308). They further state that "these students helped the administrator to see why it is necessary for some students to be open, even emphatically vocal about who they are" (Adams *et al*, 2000, 308). In addition "breaking the silence is a risk" (Adams *et al*, 2000, 308). It is a risk some never take because the consequences can be great, especially in a society where basic rights to employment, housing, and health care are not secured by all, regardless of their sexual orientation. Breaking the silence is a choice he has come to respect and that he admires those students who are no longer silent. "They are being brave and being honest. We can all benefit from trying to listen" (Adams *et al*, 2000, 309).

hooks (in Adams *et al*, 2000) recounts the positive and caring experience of a black male from New Orleans, who admitted his homosexuality to his black male roommate. Such an account calls into question the assumption that black people and black communities are necessarily more homophobic than other groups of people in society, and encourages the recognition that

there are diversities of black experience. Unfortunately, there are very few oral histories and autobiographies that explore the lives of black gay people in diverse black communities.

hooks (in Adams *et al*, 2000) indicates that black communities are perceived as more homophobic because there is a tendency for individuals to express verbally, in an outspoken way, anti-gay sentiments. hooks states that when speaking to a heterosexual black male in a California community, this man said that although he had made jokes, poking fun at gays in his private life, he was actually a central support person for a gay sister. Such contradictory behaviour seems pervasive in black communities.

2.10. The complexity of identity

According to Tatum (2000) the concept of identity is a complex one. Individuals' identities are largely shaped by the perceptions of other people about who individuals are. This is not a one-dimensional reflection, but rather a multidimensional reflection. Social groups and categorisations have their basis in understanding that social power lies at the heart of all intergroup relations, group processes, and perceptions and understandings of the social self (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Social identities are not influenced by only one form of difference, but are the complex result of the interaction of all forms of difference in an individual's social identity 'checklist'. Prejudice, discrimination and oppression may exist on more than one level for an individual who belongs to subordinate, target social groups such as female, black, disabled, poor and lesbian. Being gay or lesbian is only one factor in an individual's social identity profile, while an individual's social identity profile cuts across many different forms of difference from class and gender to race and religion. How gay and lesbian people experience their identities will therefore be influenced by other dimensions of their identity, such as, gender, class, race, culture and religion. Any one individual's social identity is multi-faceted and multi-layered. An investigation of the experiences of gays and lesbians cannot then, exclude an understanding of the multi-layered dimension of identity.

D'Augelli (1989) is a researcher interested in investigating the lived experiences of LGB youth. Among these obstacles is that it is often difficult to identify gay and lesbian youth as they may be hiding their homosexual identity and wearing the mask of heterosexism to avoid the stigma and prejudice that accompanies homosexuality. Richardson (2006) believes that South African researchers investigating the lived experiences of LGB youth in the South African context need

“to rethink the ways we define and speak about them. We need to be concerned with how social class, race, gender, culture, religion, and sexuality, intersect and impact differently on the behaviours, identities, and views” of young black youth living in the particular context of South Africa (Richardson, 2006, 135).

An individual might be Christian and homosexual. Historically, the conflict regarding homosexuality has been largely dominated by cultural, religious interpretation of the Bible, as has been discussed already in this chapter. This combination of social group identities may result in conflict and may lead to forcing the individual to choose the predominance of one of these social identity groups over the other.

Lim-Hing's personal account of her experiences as a lesbian (Lim-Hing, in Adams *et al*, 2000) include those which occur at the intersection of homosexuality and race. According to Lim-Hing, the subject of race and sexuality can be approached in two ways: firstly, how race can influence understandings of sexuality; and secondly, how sexuality can influence understandings of race. Through her involvement in a group called the Alliance for Massachusetts Asian Lesbians and Gay Men (AMALGM), Lim-Hing became aware of racism within the gay community, and the lack of sufficient dialogue about race. She reflects on Asian invisibility in the gay community and the direct prejudice she experienced as a result of being Asian. Lim-Hing states that she became less attracted to being a part of the gay community, because they had been inculcated to appreciate and emulate white standards and types of beauty. She relates her experience of being in a gay bar ordering a drink and hearing two people commenting that she should go back to her oriental country. Although racism and homophobia are two different forms of oppression, they have similar sources – the intolerance and exclusion of people based on being perceived as ‘other’ (Lim-Hing, in Adams *et al*, 2000, 299).

According to hooks (in Adams *et al*, 2000) the greatest threat to gay rights does not reside in black communities. Black homosexuals and white homosexuals do not enjoy the same happiness in their gatherings. Black lesbians have spoken about the absence of acknowledgement of one another at social gatherings, where the majority of black women present are with white female lovers. Unfortunately such incidents reinforce the notion that one must choose between solidarity with those with whom one shares a sexual orientation, irrespective of class and one's ethnic difference (hooks, in Adams *et al*, 2000). Often, black

gays feel extremely isolated because there are tensions in their relationships with the predominately white gay community created by racism, and tensions within black communities around issues of homophobia. Hooks adds that one black gay male felt that it was more important for him to live within a supportive black community, where his sexual orientation was known, but not acted out in an overt manner, than to live away in a gay sub-culture where his identity could be openly expressed (hooks, in Adams et al, 2000).

Distiller (2005) stresses the importance of talking about being a lesbian in the changing South African society based on the belief that in the context of multi-layered public discourses of human rights and equality, homosexuality remains a topic which the majority of South Africans remain ignorant and prejudiced about. Distiller (2005) draws attention to the fact that identity (in general) is constructed within the patriarchal economy, and traces some of the major strands of thoughts within the feminist and queer psychoanalytic theory which engage in the positioning of lesbians as doubly perverse. The notion of the lesbian and the issue of lesbian desire are mostly engaged with in relation to premises and assumptions within the normative heterosexuality mindset. For example, it is often assumed that a woman is a lesbian because she has been abused by a man or because her life circumstances have lead to her hating men. It is further believed that all a lesbian needs to be 'cured' of this phase of homosexuality is a real man. Understandings of lesbian desire are also framed within normative heterosexual thinking – it is commonly assumed that one lesbian in a partnership is the 'man' and the other is the woman. Distiller highlights the difficulty lesbians have in speaking about their homosexuality in South Africa because of the gendered way most people interpret homosexuality – homosexuals invariably fall into one or the other of the available stereotypes: the "butch" (referring to a lesbian who people believe displays traditionally accepted masculine qualities); and the "moffie" (referring to a gay man who people believe displays traditionally accepted feminine qualities) (Distiller, 2005).

Differential levels of discrimination and marginalisation exist between gays and lesbians. According to hooks (in Adams *et al*, 2000) marginalization is often more exercised towards lesbian women than towards gay men. To be lesbian is taken as being more unnatural, more abnormal and more deviant than homosexuality among men (Sanger and Clowes, 2006).

Matabeni's (2007) research into sexual identities among South African women who self-identify as lesbian, highlights the numerous struggles women in same-sex relationships face if they are

poor and that this is evident in how “women experience, analyse and articulate their daily struggles around sexuality in relation to their material and symbolic struggles central to their lives”. Matabeni (2007) argues that access to resources, material survival and sexuality, identity, intimacy and community should not be seen in isolation from each other. “Identity categories such as race, gender, class, sex and sexuality are essentially interrelated and simultaneously experienced” (Matabeni, 2007, 100). Women in same-sex relationships are commonly reminded of social structures and issues related to social power in patriarchal societies and the economic limitations that define their daily contexts (Matabeni, 2007).

Brown (1989) posed questions such as: who are the real lesbians? what makes a woman a lesbian? by what paths do women arrive at a definition of themselves as lesbian? According to Brown (1989, 4), while a lesbian identity is “a primarily self-ascribed definition held by a woman over time and across situations” and this definition may come and go as circumstances change, a lesbian identity may also be ascribed to a woman by others even if she disapproves of the definition. In many of the debates it seems to be a question of whether a woman is a lesbian or not. However, there are no cut-and-dried labels that can be attached to a woman uniformly. For instance, a woman who has had a brief same-sex relationship but is mainly sexually and romantically involved with men, may not label herself a lesbian (Brown 1989). Another example is where two women are living together but have never been sexual with one another. Others may want to define them as lesbian although they may not label themselves as such (Brown, 1989). Yet another example is when two females are involved with each other while one or both maintain their marriages to men. Brown (1989, 5) cites these examples as “ambiguous public sexual identities.”

According to Brown (1989), this move towards absolute labelling as lesbian or not seems to stem from the dominant North American culture which requires well defined boundaries and labels for the purpose of discrimination. Brown initiates discussion on further complexities regarding sexual identities: in American lesbian cultural feminist circles, a question is often posed as to whether a male-to-female transsexual who is partnered with a woman can be considered a lesbian for the purpose of inclusion in lesbian culture. Brown (1989) defines a lesbian as a woman whose primary sexual and affectionate attractions are to other women and who has a sexual minority identity (her sexual orientation places her apart from the sexual mainstream) even though she may not use the term “lesbian”.

Gevisser and Cameron (1995) have co-authored a number of books which cite a range of literature based on various researchers' work in the area of homosexuality in South African communities. Their writings draw attention to the reality that gays and lesbians are often stereotyped (Gevisser and Cameron, 1995). They reject the notion of an essential stereotyped, one-dimensional gay or lesbian identity or image, and instead, advocate the multiplicity of the gay and lesbian experience, and the celebration of diversity within the gay and lesbian sub-cultures. They believe that "a more lasting acceptance and tolerance of sexual minorities will come once we are acknowledged in all our complexity" (Gevisser and Cameron, 1995, 12).

The use of a continuum in trying to understand the field of sexuality, points to the fact that explaining sexuality in terms of binary opposites is insufficient. An individual does not necessarily fall into an either/or category: either homosexual or heterosexual. It seems that both heterosexuals and homosexuals alike fall into the trap of labelling people according to binary opposites, when in reality there is a whole continuum of realities and identifications with regard to sexuality. Many theorists and researchers agree that there is a spectrum of sexuality from purely gay to purely heterosexual (Adams *et al*, 2000).

Deihl and Ochs (in Adams *et al*, 2000) note that bi-sexuals (people who have sexual desires for both genders) suffer even more oppression than gays and lesbians. Sexual categories have long been founded on the illusion that there are two separate sexual identities, homosexual and heterosexual. Biphobia, like homophobia is a prejudice based on negative stereotypes and it is often born of ignorance. According to Deihl and Ochs (in Adams *et al*, 2000), homophobic heterosexual men and women alike react negatively to bisexuality, as they react negatively to homosexuality, but with bisexuality there is the added dimension of identification with the heterosexual half of a bisexual person. People may therefore feel more threatened because they see that the 'other' is not quite as different as they had believed. While gays and lesbians are becoming more visible in the mainstream media, the sexual minority status of bisexuals is simply one of non-existence.

The bisexual identity is a difficult one to navigate, not only because of the obvious prejudices of heterosexuals, but also because of the discriminatory opinions of homosexuals. Bisexuals are often perceived as lesbians who want access to heterosexuals' privileges or heterosexuals who want access to the support and excitement of the lesbian community (Deihl and Ochs, in Adams *et al*, 2000). Any perceived "regression" by gays "converting" back to heterosexuality is

considered a threat and “gay and lesbian people who become bisexual often meet with the challenges of betrayal and anger” (Deihl and Ochs, in Adams *et al*, 2000, 278). The fears expressed about bisexuals are largely based on ignorance. According to Deihl and Ochs (in Adams *et al*, 2000), bisexuality defies old categories and evokes new responses.

Deihl and Ochs (in Adams *et al*, 2000) add that members of the lesbian community are of the opinion that bisexual women dissolve the power of the lesbian community and that, according to this reasoning, bisexual women should be excluded from attending lesbian events. When women and men reveal their identity as bisexuals, their gay and lesbian friends often judge them as ‘confused’, not knowing whether they are gay or not (Deihl and Ochs, in Adams *et al*, 2000). Such narrow binary understandings of sexual identities by homosexuals themselves, denies the complexity of identity and could result in the marginalisation and silencing of those individuals who consider themselves bisexual.

Potgieter (1994) claims that lesbianism has been historically marginalized more than homosexuality and explains the lack of recognition of lesbianism as an “ideology of disbelief” favoured by a patriarchal system unable to understand that men might not be necessary to women (Potgieter, 1994, 94). According to Epstein (1994) the fact that female lesbians disappear in a traditionally patriarchal world has been documented in feminist writing in terms of the specifics of Western women, and in terms of the specific experience of girls in the context of British and US schools. This creates an additional form of invisibility for young lesbians in the gay world. Although the sexuality of gay male scholars is often made invisible in the school context, outside of school institutions young gay men are more likely to find more reference to their sexuality than young lesbians. Lesbians feel ignored and isolated within the school context.

Author bell hooks explains how findings from her research show that in the same area people could experience things differently. The findings of bell hooks indicate that where she lived, gay and lesbian people lived lives of double standards. Black male homosexuals were often known, talked about, seen positively and played important roles in community life (hooks, in Adams *et al*, 2000), whereas lesbians were talked about solemnly in negative terms, and the women identified as lesbians were usually married. Gay men were mediated by material privilege, that is to say homosexual men with money were part of the materially privileged ruling black group, and were accorded the regard and respect given that group (hooks, in Adams *et al*, 2000).

2.11. Developing a liberatory consciousness

hooks (in Adams *et al*, 2000) argues that people should be given a chance to choose and claim the sexual identity that best expresses their being. bell also suggests that all people should be struggling to create a climate where there is freedom of sexual expression. hooks' goal of social justice is to see all people treated in the same manner in the society where they live. She believes it is important to identify and analyse internalised homophobia in the life experiences of gays and lesbians; develop strategies for interrupting internalised homophobia; facilitate an environment that is free of homophobia and oppression; identify and describe actions that can be taken to transform society and eliminate homophobia and oppression; explore the liberation of consciousness and how this might be applied to the elimination of homophobia and oppression; and develop action plans aimed at increasing homosexuals' capacity and readiness to take action to eliminate homophobia and oppression.

The existence of collusion on the part of homosexuals in many societies further hinders the identification and elimination of oppression, but instead perpetuates the status quo of the dominance of heterosexuality. Collusion serves to support and reinforce those beliefs and attitudes and encourage other homosexuals to behave in a way consistent with feeling of powerlessness, inadequate, and accepting subordinate status in the community and society. Empowerment of targeted groups is understandably scarce, wherein members of the social group named and rendered subordinate, inferior, deviant and powerless refuse to accept the existing ideology of affirming another group's dominant status and accepting their own targeted and subordinate status, and take action to redistribute social power more equitably.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This research study utilises both a qualitative research approach and an interpretive approach. These approaches have been selected because “they emphasize understanding human lived experience from participants’ own perspectives and situated knowledges” (D’amant, 2010, 89). Narrative inquiry and semi-structured interviews have been selected as the research methodologies used to generate data based on the need for authentic representation and voices of participants to be heard through the research. The use of narrative inquiry specifically aims to obtain an insider’s view and understand the experiences of gays and lesbians in Inanda from the perspective of the participants themselves.

In addition to outlining the research methodology selected for this research, this chapter also discusses important research issues, such as ethical issues, validity and the role of the researcher.

3.2. A qualitative research design

In this research a qualitative research approach has been used, as it focuses on understanding human experiences. A qualitative research design was chosen over a quantitative one, as the former involves the search for an understanding of human experience, unlike the latter which involves the scientific search for causes and effects. The difference between these two types of research designs revolves around the purposes of inquiry of each – Qualitative research intends to understand phenomena as opposed to quantitative research which intends to explain. This difference between quantitative and qualitative research is the differentiation between knowledge ‘discovered’ and knowledge ‘constructed’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Selecting a qualitative design therefore permits this research to attempt to understand rather than explain individuals’ realities. “While quantitative research understands truth and knowledge as an external reality, separate from the knower, qualitative research articulates a view of knowledge as a social construction and of situated knowledge” (D’amant, 2010, 6). A qualitative research design takes into consideration the importance of meaning and the importance of situations, context and details (Jipson and Paley, 1997). Investigating human

endeavours, interactions and individual experiences are therefore undertaken towards this end, that of attempting to understand. The assumption is that quantitative research cannot directly capture lived experience, whereas qualitative research offers the alternative of gathering and presenting data in ways that allow the participants to speak for themselves. The selection of a qualitative research design enables this research to present the experiences of gay and lesbian people in as authentic a manner as possible.

Qualitative researchers are committed to the interpretive understanding of human experience. A qualitative research design is used because it enables the researcher to investigate the social realities and personal experiences of gays and lesbians, with a view to gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the gay and lesbian participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

3.3. An interpretive approach

Qualitative research is characterised by an interpretive approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), as both interpretivism and qualitative research are often used interchangeably. An interpretive approach deals with understanding psychological and social phenomena from the view point of the people involved (Cohen *et al*, 2000). Qualities of an interpretive inquiry suit this research as it is connected with trying to understand individual participants.

3.4. Narrative inquiry

Personal narratives have been selected as the strategy of inquiry for this research. Narrative inquiry is a strategy of data collection in which participants' stories are used to capture human experience. Narrative inquiry enables the researcher to enter worlds of experiences different from her own, thereby engaging in an indirect experiential understanding of gays' and lesbians' experience.

While no research can ever claim to fully capture the lived experiences of people, narrative inquiry is a form of research in which human experiences can be expressed. Narrative inquiry enables the participants to speak for themselves. It is important to me as the researcher that participants' experiences of being gay and lesbian be expressed in as authentic a way as possible. Narrative inquiry has the ability to capture the situated complexities of participants' experiences of homosexuality. The purpose of this study is to authentically reflect individual

participants' experiences of being gay and lesbian, and how these impact on participants' identity formation.

3.5. My sample

The sample consists of eight participants, four gay participants and four lesbian participants. As this research intended investigating the experiences and lived realities of gays and lesbians, the necessary criteria used to select participants was that they identified themselves as gay or lesbian.

The sample of eight participants was drawn from the township area of Inanda, in the greater Durban area. A snowballing sampling method was used. This method of sampling is useful in research situations where research topics are sensitive. This method suits the study, as I did not have direct or easy access to the gay and lesbian population, and also, such issues are sensitive. The snowballing method of sampling enabled me to identify a small number of individuals who had characteristics which were of centrality to my research. Initial individuals put me in touch with more individuals who identified themselves as gay or lesbian according to the requirements of the research, and these, in turn, identified others.

3.6. Context

The sample of participants was drawn from the township area of Inanda, in the greater Durban area. Inanda is a township in the northern area of greater Durban, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. It is situated thirty kilometres from central Durban and has a population of about twenty thousand people. The general means of transport to and from this township are taxis, which take residents to town or to work.

Inhabitants of Inanda are mainly Zulu-speaking people with some Xhosa-speaking people. The dominant home language of the Inanda township is therefore isiZulu. The Zulu culture is very entrenched in the community of Inanda and its community members. Learners learn Zulu dancing at the local township schools and wear traditional Zulu attire on specific culturally important days.

The inhabitants of Inanda were racially identified as blacks under the apartheid government in South Africa. These black people were forced into areas designated for blacks only as a result of the South African Group Areas Act (1950) which forcefully and lawfully entrenched

residential segregation which sought to separate peoples' living areas according to race. Even after the end of apartheid, the legacy of poverty in black communities continues. Inanda township is the direct result of enforced segregation and class differentiation along the lines of race. The racial classification of apartheid created class divisions along the lines of race, privileging whites and marginalising and oppressing non-whites. Among the non-whites in South Africa, the blacks were the most marginalised and under-developed. As a result, poverty was an overwhelming reality in black townships.

Unemployment is high among the residents of Inanda and the average standard of living is low. Many of the women usually seek employment in the nearby suburbs where they earn a minimum wage for washing or cleaning houses. Many of the people in the township live in shacks. The walls are made out of reeds and the roofs are covered with plastic which is easily removed by strong winds. Many shack inhabitants cannot afford cement to build their houses, resulting in a lot of dust on the floors. These people are extremely disadvantaged and marginalized. Some people have managed to improve the quality of their lives and have secured employment and have bigger homes for themselves and their families.

There are only three primary schools and one high school in the Inanda township, built by the white government under apartheid. Teenage pregnancy, dagga, drugs, and alcohol are common social issues in the township, as these often correlate with high levels of poverty.

3.7. Data collection

Interviews in qualitative research can be either open-ended or semi-structured. The method that has been used for collection of data in this particular research is the face-to-face, semi-structured interview. I constructed open-ended interview questions, where sequencing and framing of questions were considered. For example, easier, less threatening and non-controversial questions were addressed earlier in the interview in order to put the participants at ease. Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to be more flexible and free when giving accounts and explanations of their daily experiences of being gay or lesbian. I tried to be flexible and therefore make the interview process flexible, in the sense that the participants were given the space to answer open-ended questions freely in their own way and in their own time, and were urged to go back or give more detail with regard to earlier responses.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for this flexibility in that I was able to further investigate certain statements or experiences in flexible and sensitive ways. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to constantly consider the dynamics of the situation throughout the interviews, ensuring that free-flowing, easy conversation was kept going as well as being mindful of how to motivate participants to discuss their thoughts, feelings and experiences of being gay and lesbian. While flexible, the semi-structured interviews gave some form of structure, while not being too rigid.

The framing of questions for the semi-structured interviews needed to consider the importance of prompts and probes. Prompts enabled me to clarify topics or questions, whilst probes enabled me to ask respondents to extend, expand, elaborate on, add to, and provide details to qualify or clarify participants' responses. Using prompts and probes to further investigate participants' experiences, allowed participants to give more clarity in terms of the meaning that they attached to experiences, or the way they made sense of their experiences. Emphasis on certain aspects of conversation and discussion during semi-structured interviews were clarified in a supportive way. This was a way of ensuring richness of data, depth of responses and comprehensiveness, which are some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing (Patton, 1990).

All interviews were conducted on Saturdays in the Soulbuddyz Club at the school where I teach. Soulbuddyz was introduced to schools through the Department of Education for the purpose of developing leadership skills and life skills in learners. Learners join on a purely voluntary basis. My role as the facilitator of this club is also on a voluntary basis. I believe it has filled a great need in many learners' lives. They learn about various issues that impact on their young lives and are given a safe space to discuss issues that most of their parents are afraid to talk about with their children, such as sexuality, childrens' rights, sex education, HIV/AIDS awareness, etc. This club provided a safe space for gay and lesbian learners to share and discuss the challenges they experience as a result of their sexual orientation. It was with the full knowledge and permission of the school principal that this club started in our school, and it was understood that issues discussed in the meetings would be kept confidential. Learners who joined the club and participated in the meetings and discussions were treated equally and with respect. Their input was accepted, not judged, and viewed as valid and necessary. Confidentiality was ensured.

3.8. The role of the researcher

As the researcher, I could not claim to identify with participants fully or stand in their shoes absolutely, due to being heterosexual by identity and therefore belonging to the agent social group with regard to sexual identity. This could have proved to be an obstacle to the research process. Participants may have felt judged by someone of my identity, and may have felt alienated from me because of our difference. To counteract this possibility it was important that I was mindful not to superimpose any preconceptions, prejudices or discrimination on participants. Although I believed that I did not have any prejudices against gays and lesbians, such attitudes and socialised messages of value judgements as a result of difference, could easily and unconsciously be present. It was of utmost importance that I explored, identified and confronted any emergence of these attitudes throughout the research process. I therefore documented my feelings, thoughts, attitudes and reactions after each interview, to encourage my own critical reflection during the data generation phase of this research.

As the researcher, I was obliged to listen attentively to the accounts of the daily lives of participants. The process of generating data required time and full commitment on my part as the researcher. During interviews and conversations I needed to show participants that I was not sitting in a position of judgement but was genuinely interested and committed to attempting to understand their lived experiences. Through our conversations before and after the semi-structured interviews, I believe I showed participants that I was genuinely concerned about the prejudice and discrimination which they encounter each day, and that I wanted to create a safe environment where they could share their personal realities and experiences of being gay and lesbian.

There was evidence that participants felt accepted for who they are, felt safe to share their experiences and concerns, and that these were valued and taken seriously. The participants reported that they felt that their stories were listened to and accepted with empathy. Their stories often remained in my mind for weeks after their initial sharing of them, and these memories were accompanied by feelings of sadness as I remembered their hurt.

A strong sense of mutual trust was created and developed between participants and myself as the researcher. I was open to all participants and accepting of them. Participants shared with me that they were surprised to find a person who wanted to hear about their lives and how they experienced being gay and lesbian. Participants showed trust and happiness on all occasions

when we met. These factors lead to ensuring the full co-operation of all participants in this research endeavour.

3.9. Validity

The most important way of achieving validity in research is to minimise the amount of bias as far as possible. Bias would include the opinions, attitudes and expectations of the researcher and the tendency of the researcher to see participants in her own image, as well as a tendency to seek interpretations that may support her preconceived notions. Researchers and respondents alike bring their own, often unconsciousness, experiences with them into the interview situation.

Because interviews are interpersonal, humans interacting with humans, it is inevitable that biases and influences play some part in the data generation. I tried very hard not to show biases that I might have and to ensure that participants' responses were not influenced by my reactions or attitudes to them. I consciously created an environment that was safe for participants and where they were given the chance to relate their stories as openly as they could. I believe a mutual trust was created between myself and the participants.

There was always the chance that participants may give misinformation (often unintentionally) or inconsistent information. The second interview gave me a further opportunity to probe issues or statements which emerged in the initial interviews, which needed clarification or verification.

3.10. Interpretation, discussion and presentation

I read through all transcripts of interviews and identified themes which emerged from these narratives. Individual narratives are compared under each theme and similarities and links between narratives made. These themes are interpreted in the light of the theoretical and conceptual framework which underpins this study and the relevant literature reviewed.

Data has been written up according to the main themes which emerged during the interpretation of data. Authentic experiences of participants have been incorporated into the presentation of data, in the form of direct quotations.

3.11. Ethical Issues

This research considered the broad ethical principles of autonomy and non-maleficence as outlined by Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002). As the snowballing sampling method was used, I was clear with all participants that it was voluntary to participate in the research, and that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they wanted to. A clear explanation of the research, its purpose and how I planned to generate data, was outlined to each participant. What was required of participants was also clearly spelled out, so that they could make informed choices to participate voluntarily in the research.

I also told the participants how the data would be gathered, recorded and processed. Confidentiality was ensured. I ensured participants that their names would not be mentioned when reporting on the findings of the research. I did not promise participants any reward nor did I offer them any benefits to secure their participation in the research. I ensured that participants were all treated with respect and consideration at all times. The safety of the participants was ensured by arranging all meetings and interview sessions on Saturdays, where there was no-one besides me present. It was a priority not to cause any harm to the research participants and not to put them at any risk. Participants may have been reluctant to talk honestly and openly about their experiences and feelings if they feared that the information they disclosed may harm their reputation or jeopardize their standing in the school or the community. I realised that if participants were to share their experiences they needed to be assured of safety and privacy, that they would be respected and accepted, and that what they said would be kept confidential (Lyons, Kubler, and LaBoskey, 2002).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that it is important that researchers exercise great caution to minimise potential risks to participants and that participants are not simply faceless, nameless, unidentifiable, subjects. It was therefore important that participants not be treated as such. I was constantly aware of the vulnerability of participants and concerned with protecting their identities and their well-being.

I assured participants that their identities and any situations, experiences or interpretation of these which may emerge through the data, would be treated as confidential. Indirectly this would affect the nature, quality and richness of the data gathered. If participants felt secure that the offered information would be treated confidentially, they would be free in their interactions

with me, and more willing to share their experiences, feelings and thoughts in a more honest fashion. It was imperative that a relationship of trust be maintained at all times.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1. Introduction

The focus of my study was on the experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area as well as the impact of these experiences on their personal identities. The methodological approach was semi-structured interviews of four gays and four lesbians living in and around the Inanda area.

In keeping with the focus of my study, and thus responding directly to the two research questions being “What are the experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area?” and “How do these experiences impact on their personal identities?” I decided to divide this chapter into two themes both responding in turn to each of the two research questions. The themes are as follows: Theme 1: Experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area; and Theme 2: Impact of experiences on identity. The analysis is done thematically with the first theme comprising five sub-themes and the second theme just four. In each sub-theme I have taken direct quotations from the spoken words of the participants and analyzed them.

4.2. Theme 1: Experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda Area

4.2.1. *Gays and lesbians experience victimization*

“It is very difficult for gay/lesbian people to walk in community streets without being harassed or intimidated”.

“They call us names, ‘staban’, ‘abnormal’, ‘criminals’, ‘sinners’, ‘dirty things’ and ‘people who are cursed in the face of the community’ ”.

“One of the two boys greeted me and said, ‘I hate you.’ When I asked him why, he answered by kicking me hard and I nearly fell. I just ran away. Fortunately, my room was not far from the tuck shop”.

"Move them away, we don't want them here".

"No place for homosexuals, this is our land".

"We are teased and harassed in our daily lives".

"Two best friends of mine committed suicide. Their father from the same family forced them to have sex together and with men. It was hard for them so they both killed themselves".

Throughout the interviews the theme of victimization on the part of homosexuals emerged. Such victimization was imposed by the group identified as being dominant (heterosexuals), thus the "they" in the spoken words captured above refers in this instance to heterosexuals and how they contribute to the prevailing experiences of the eight participants in my study. The victimization of homosexuals, according to the participants, goes beyond mere name calling and other forms of verbal abuse, as is apparent from the extracts above, they (the "they" identified earlier) not only "call us names" and pass remarks such as "we don't want them here" but physical attacks are also inflicted on homosexuals as one participant blatantly expresses, "When I asked him why, he answered by kicking me." Indeed the victimization experienced by the participants in my study has had far reaching effects, this assertion may be justified by a participant's claim that two of their friends even went as far as committing suicide after being subjected to victimization by one's father in the form of him forcing the two homosexuals concerned to engage in sexual intercourse with each other and other men, not of their choosing. This was justified only by the mere fact that they were homosexuals. Griffin (1993, 14.) asserts that Gay and lesbian people suffer rejection and victimization, and are "unjustly subjected to prejudice and discrimination." This has evidently been the experiences of the participants in my study as their spoken words have revealed.

4.2.2. Prejudices are experienced as being pervasive

"These people speak about whites and Boers who excluded them long ago, and didn't even think much of them if they died; however what they are doing is more wrong because they exclude and feel very little about the deaths of their own homosexual children".

The above extract is in my mind very powerful. Fearing that its meaning and accordingly some of its powerfulness may be lost I have thus elected to discuss it separately from all other extracts. This way it will unlikely be robbed of the spotlight. With reference to prejudices The general attitude that homosexuals deserve to be killed (as the next extract suggests) *"Heterosexuals say we are a curse and we deserve to die or to be killed"* and also deserve exclusion (as expressed in the following extract) *"When community gatherings (meetings) take place it is felt that we must be excluded"* is an attitude that most certainly runs through other forms of oppression, and is thus not limited only to heterosexism. This is highlighted in the extract above which suggests that located within racism (as a form of oppression) whites (the dominants) had a similar prejudice towards blacks (subordinates) readily excluding them and feeling very little remorse if they died. Nevertheless, as also stated in the extract which forms the focus of this sub-theme, this attitude of complacency with the exclusion of subordinates and perhaps even their deaths most certainly extends itself beyond racism, and as captured above, according to a participant in my study, finds its way into heterosexism. Prejudices, according to the participant who spoke the words above, are indeed pervasive if one were to consider various forms of oppression. Young (2000) argues that social inequality and prejudice does not exist only in one place, or in one set of circumstances, but spreads through a complex web of relationships and structures, saturating most aspects of life in our society. The acknowledgement that prejudices are pervasive is thus of vital importance in my study.

4.2.3. A sense of burdening heterosexuals is experienced

"My dad said to me, "I will be grateful to see you working and having your own place, before I die." From that day, I prayed to be independent, to give my dad space. I do not want to be a burden to anyone."

"Most heterosexuals are not prepared to change to accept us. They feel they will be losing their identity"

"Heterosexuals feel the need to take care of their children, and to guard them against us when we are around as we (homosexuals) are supposedly spreading HIV/AIDS".

The words in the first extract make clear the fact that the participant to whom they belong has experienced a tremendous feeling of being a burden to their parent simply by virtue of being

homosexual. In addition to that, the second extract reveals that another participant has experienced a feeling of heterosexuals being forced to lose their identity if they were to “change” so as to, by their definition, accept homosexuals. This suggests that the acceptance of homosexuals, in the opinion of this participant, comes at so great a burden to heterosexuals that they must change and accordingly lose their identity merely to accept homosexuals. If that is not enough of a burden, the third extract, by yet another participant, suggests that heterosexuals are also burdened with having to protect their children from homosexuals when they are around as they are perceived as the ones who are spreading HIV/AIDS. All three extracts make clear the experience of sensing that one is burdening heterosexuals simply because one happens to belong to the supposed socially undervalued group of homosexuals. A feeling that is perpetuated by the fact that the participants in this study have experienced many heterosexuals who tend to view homosexuals as being “the problem”, “a burden” and must thus be guarded against. This correlates with Matabeni’s (2007, 102) assertion that South Africa remains “highly homophobic, patriarchal and heterosexist” despite recent calls for progressive change as well as marked shifts in policy. The countering of homophobic, patriarchal and heterosexual attitudes may free heterosexuals of their, in my view, self-imposed burden, thus homosexuals may be less likely to experience feelings of being undervalued due to homophobic attitudes and practices.

4.2.4. ‘Coming out’ is experienced as one of the hardest things

“In my experience parents feel guilty and ashamed asking what they have done wrong in the world to deserve being given such children, children who are gays and lesbians”.

“I’ve often heard people say, when asked about gays and lesbians, “I believe that there is a bad ancestor in the family who is allowing such bad and confusing behaviour. These people are worse than criminals. No one would like their children to come near them”.”

“My mum thinks that I will influence my brothers and sisters to become gay.”

“They don’t want us, we mustn’t exist.”

In light of the extracts above, “coming out” as a homosexual would undoubtedly be a very difficult hurdle for many an individual to overcome. My discussion that follows will support this

statement. The first extract makes explicit a feeling of guilt on the part of parents when their children “come out” as being of homosexual sexual orientation with parents going as far as asking what it is that they have done wrong to deserve such children. The fact that the words “what have I done wrong” and “deserve such children” are used imply a feeling of repercussion for an action taken. This signifies that parents in this instance view having homosexual children as some sort of punishment for a sort of ill-act committed. This belief finds support in the next extract which speaks about bad ancestors allowing such things to happen as it is often believed in traditional African cultures that ancestors guide and protect the living, accordingly where they fail to do so by “allowing” such things to happen it can likely be inferred that they are condoning a sort of punishment on one or some of the living due to their less than desirable actions taken in the course of their lives. It is no wonder then, that the participant in the first extract speaks of parents feeling that they have done something wrong to deserve homosexual children. The next two extracts (or final two) suggest a deep rejection of homosexual children as parents do not want them influencing their siblings, which is often code for have little or no dealings with the siblings. Even more powerful in terms of asserting rejection is the final extract which bluntly states that they (homosexuals) are not wanted, they must not exist. In the context of these statements and my discussion around them, it seems only logical to argue that coming out would undoubtedly be experienced as one of the hardest obstacles to overcome by many homosexual children. Richardson (2006) notes that the findings of a study conducted by Butler, Alpanan, Strumpher and Astbury (2003) which analyzed the coming out narratives of 18 gay and lesbian South African youth expresses clearly that the context in which homosexual youth find themselves is often one which makes the experience a difficult one. The statement “coming out is experienced as one of the hardest things” which constitutes the heading and captures the focus of this sub-theme is thus supported.

4.2.5. *A feeling of displacement is experienced*

Remaining on the notion of context being non-conducive to the comfortable existence of homosexuals, under my new sub-theme I now draw the reader’s attention to the following extracts:

“Straight people often say there is no place for homosexuals, this is our land”.

“Sometimes we homosexuals decide to lie about our sexual orientation because we are teased and harassed in our daily lives”.

"My father said that he will be grateful to see me working and having my own place, before he dies so he will no longer have to live with me."

"When I go out, I go straight to the shop and, after buying goods, I quickly return to my room to avoid violence and name-calling".

"It is very difficult for gay/lesbian people to walk in community streets without being harassed or intimidated".

The first extract makes explicit the fact that homosexuals are not wanted with the heterosexuals going as far as laying claim to the land, land which supposedly is theirs to determine who belongs on it and who does not, at least that has been the experience of the participant who shared those words. The next extract suggests a situation of homosexuals having to deny their identity and adopt a false identity merely to be accepted by the broader society. This is a form of colluding with the status quo of heterosexuality as acceptable and appropriate, which the dominant group (heterosexuals) have established. This is likely a desperate attempt to avoid experiencing a feeling of displacement due to rejection by many heterosexuals. However, in the third extract it becomes apparent that this rejection and resultant feeling of displacement is often induced on a level that is somewhat more personal than merely being rejected by the community through encounters on the streets. In fact here one comes to realize that rejection is experienced in the homes of many and induced through actions and sentiments of supposed loved ones. In the instance in question (third extract), the father of a homosexual has done nothing short of telling them that they are not welcomed in his house, and he would be grateful if he did not have to live with them. Nevertheless, the final two extracts shift the attention back to experiences of rejection outside of the home to the extent that the home seems to become a refuge for homosexuals as they are, in the experiences of the participants above, constantly harassed in the streets of their community. This harassment takes place to such a large extent that these homosexuals have become prisoners in their own homes. The irony of this of course, is that it is in these same homes in which refuge is sought, that harsh instances of rejection are experienced as rejection from the ones whom we love the most is often the most hurtful of all experiences. D'Augelli (1997) contends that homosexuals are often rejected because of their difference; they are excluded from many activities taking

place in their own communities; discriminated against, prejudiced, victimized, harassed and often find themselves being the targets of violence. In addition to this, keeping on the point of context being non-conducive to a homosexuals' comfortable existence, and our living in South Africa, it must be noted that Epprecht (2004) proffers that most traditional societies in Africa believe that homosexuality pollutes their countries and misfortunes such as droughts, hunger and disease are often blamed on homosexuality. This has subsequently contributed to situations where individual gays and lesbians have been subjected to extensive violence. Being treated in this manner in one's own community, and indeed in one's own home, would naturally result in one experiencing feelings of displacement.

4.3. Theme 2: Impact of experiences on identity

4.3.1. *An identity not worthy of help*

"When a gay or lesbian is being beaten homosexuals say, 'They get what they deserve'."

"Most heterosexuals refuse to accept us or even understand us, instead they want to kill what they don't understand."

"My neighbours have warned me not to come near their sons and daughters and they have spoken to their children telling them not to go near 'those criminals'."

The identities of these homosexuals have been impacted to such a degree that they feel as if they are not worthy, or at least viewed as not being worthy of help. This is evident in the claim, above, that when homosexuals are being beaten they are in fact getting what they deserve. Naturally if a message like that is constantly delivered it begins to impact on one's identity, very likely in an adverse manner. In addition to supposedly deserving to be beaten up, the participants in this study are also made aware of the fact that heterosexuals, in general, rather than understanding homosexuals, would much rather kill them. This fuels the contention that one is not worthy of help, because logically speaking, if it is desired that a person should rather be killed than understood, then why bother helping them. The third extract indicates that even neighbours of the homosexuals in this study view these homosexuals as criminals and do not want them anywhere near their children thus obviating the unlikeliness of such homosexuals

obtaining any form of help from these neighbours. The participants in this study are accordingly justified in believing, and therefore claiming, that as a part of their identities they are, for the most part, not worthy of being helped. One must however be reminded that Matabeni (2007) believes that efforts should be put in place to help homosexuals (black lesbians in particular) in South Africa claim their space and talk about their sexuality in gatherings without fear of being further victimized otherwise many will remain voiceless and accordingly powerless. The necessity for homosexuals to be helped and in fact realize that they are worthy of such help is thus highlighted.

4.3.2. *An identity that is not given much regard*

"Everything is about them."

"They neither want us (homosexuals), nor allow us, to voice our views."

"If we (homosexuals) raise our opinions, heterosexuals quarrel and become violent."

Evident in the words above is that often homosexuals experience marginalization in the sense that, as expressed in the first extract, it is felt as though everything is about heterosexuals, thus implying that very little, if any, attention is paid to homosexuals. Apart from feeling as though little attention is paid to homosexuals, the second extract indicates that even the views of homosexuals is often, in the experience of the participants in this study, given little regard. Heterosexuals do not only appear to reject such views, but in the words of the participant above do not "allow" the voicing of these views. This suggests power on the part of the heterosexuals since they can supposedly "allow" or even "not allow" (deny) the voicing of views. In instances, as expressed by the third extract, where homosexuals do raise opinions, most likely by their own accord, it would appear as if heterosexuals, according to this participant, take measures such as quarrelling and becoming violent so as to silence the homosexuals. It is not surprising then that the participants in this study feel as though they have an identity which is given little regard. According to Erickson (1950) in respect of identity, acceptance and validation is fundamentally important to the development of autonomy and self-esteem for individuals in general. This lack of regard given to homosexuals will thus likely have deleterious effects on the autonomy and self-esteem and ultimately identity of the people who are treated in the manner described above.

4.3.3. A poisoned and disapproved identity

"We are told that we are dangerous animals who want to poison their daughters and sons. On a daily basis people in the community observe us, follow us, and say whatever they like about our lives."

"Heterosexuals say we are a curse and we deserve to die or to be killed."

"Heterosexual people also say homosexuals deserve to die, they (heterosexuals) do not want to see or hear about us."

Above, from the repeated use of the word "we" it is apparent that a type of group identification amongst homosexuals is present. However, it is achieved through negative characteristics which appear to be along the lines of rejection to such a degree that homosexuals in this instance are viewed as poison. The first extract makes clear that homosexuals are even told that they are in fact poison, while the second extract describes them as a curse which deserves to be killed. The development of an identity, although commonly made along the lines of social difference, is more frequently accomplished through practices of exclusion, prejudice, discrimination and oppression (Vincent, 2003). Group identification and social identity development for gays and lesbians are synonymous with negative characteristics and inferior social status, in this instance an identity synonymous with poison is evoked. This identity is naturally disapproved of with heterosexuals in the third extract going as far as expressing their desire for homosexuals to die.

4.3.4. An identity that has, and continues to, fight for rights

"Nothing has been done in the communities to raise awareness about the rights of gay and lesbian people we would like to see this happen."

"Minority groups should be recognized because they form part of the greater society."

"The law needs to deal with people who attack gays and lesbians for the safety of everyone."

"We (homosexuals) are still a proud people."

Despite the atrocities faced by the participants in this study, as described throughout this data analysis, what emerges as significant and in fact admirable is that these participants recognize, and are still prepared to fight for, their rights as human beings. The first extract demonstrates that the rights of gays and lesbians are not promoted within the community, a fact which this participant is aware of, but nevertheless makes explicit the desire to see this change. That desire is supported by the next extract which highlights the reasoning that minority groups, by virtue of being a minority, should not be ignored as they do in fact constitute the greater society, which is after all, the ones to whom rights are ascribed. In addition to this, the third extract brings this claim of rights and recognition within the ambit of the law by relying on a claim for "the greater good" to support the evocation of laws. These claims of rights and recognition all supported by the law would appear to be supported by, and perhaps even stem from, the mere fact that despite everything which the participants in this study have gone through, in particular their denial of basic human rights in a context in which laws are ironically in place to protect them, they nevertheless remain in the words of the participant who spoke in the final extract, "a proud people." Richardson (2006) argues that the main conclusion drawn from many small studies focused on gays and lesbians is that despite liberal laws which have been introduced to protect the rights of homosexuals, including the Constitution of South Africa, gay and lesbian youth are still victimized, bullied and harassed even by those who are expected to uphold the principles of the South African Constitution, including school teachers. It should also be noted that it has been highlighted by Matabeni (2007) that despite the facts that the South African Constitution makes sexual practices, identity and expression a protected right accessible to all; includes a clause prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, South Africa nevertheless remains highly homophobic, patriarchal and heterosexist. It is this acknowledgement of the continued denial of rights in respect of homosexuals located in literature, which in my mind, makes this stance for one's rights, as told through the words of these participants, all the more significant. I will thus conclude this analysis with the lingering words of one of the participants which captures the essence of this chapter: *"We exist, it is only that the society of Inanda ignores and sometimes denies us. We seek acceptance, understanding and peace. We do not want to be harassed in our own community as there is no place like home".*

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter two themes which emerged from semi-structured interviews were analyzed. The first theme being, “Experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area” under which the following sub-themes emerged: gays and lesbians experience victimization, prejudices are experienced as being pervasive, a sense of burdening heterosexuals is experienced, ‘coming out’ is experienced as one of the hardest things, and a feeling of displacement is experienced. The second theme was “Impact of experiences on identity” under which the following sub-themes emerged: an identity not worthy of help, an identity that is not given much regard, a poisoned and disapproved identity, and an identity that has, and continues to, fight for rights. The next chapter will discuss the emergent findings based on the sub-themes generated in this analysis chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

I commenced this study with an aim to gain some insight into the lived experiences of gays and lesbians living in the Inanda area as well as an aim to fathom the impact that their everyday experiences have on their identities. What has emerged will likely shock, anger and shake many a right-minded individual to the core. To bring my study to a coherent close I will, in this chapter, discuss the sub-themes which emerged in the analysis in relation to literature on point. This will be done in an integrated way. Thus, integrated meta-themes are discussed, namely: an identity that experiences victimization and the pervasiveness of prejudices; a displaced identity that burdens heterosexuals with “coming out”; experiencing living a poisoned identity that is unworthy of help and given little regard; and finally, experiencing an identity strong enough to fight for its rights.

5.2. An identity that experiences victimization and the pervasiveness of prejudices

What has clearly emerged from participants’ narratives is the continued and consistent prejudice, discrimination and general ill-treatment of gays and lesbians in spite of the Constitution of our country affording them equal human rights and the accompanying freedom to be ‘different’. Not all parents, teachers, counselors or even religious leaders, according to the participants, are in favour of equal rights for gays and lesbians. They have therefore not yet made the personal shift away from traditional and historical homophobic prejudices. Many people in the participants’ stories do not emerge as agents of change, who believe in the ideal of respecting diversity, inclusion and social justice. Instead they appear to perpetuate and even accentuate the victimization of homosexuals which is fueled by ongoing prejudices such as the general attitude that tends to be complacent with the ill-treatment of homosexuals merely because of their sexual orientation. These prejudices have been reported to have taken place on the streets, in the schools and even in the homes of the participants in my study. The pervasiveness of these prejudices towards gays and lesbians is of great concern: not only in the wider sense of realizing the gap between transformative policy (in favour of human rights

for all and non-discrimination of any form of 'difference') and what is happening in reality; but also in a more personal and human sense of empathy towards those people who are subjected to such homophobic prejudice as part of their daily experiences.

Indeed the data generated supports the notion that the participants in my study experience heterosexism as a form of oppression and have been victimized for being who they are. The model of oppression outlined in the work of Hardiman and Jackson (1997) has served as a relevant and insightful theoretical lens for this study. Young's (2000) work on the faces of oppression has also contributed to the theoretical framework of this study. Young (2000) concurs with the study's findings, arguing that members of minority groups like gays and lesbians are often victimized by communities despite transformative laws about human rights for all. In this category Young (2000) includes less severe incidents of harassment, intimidation or ridicule as well as more severe victimization such as violent attacks on gays and lesbians. These serve to degrade, humiliate and stigmatize subordinate group members, and result in homosexuals living in constant fear of victimization which is intended to damage, humiliate or even destroy them.

According to Young's (2000) theory of the faces of oppression, if one or more of the five faces which she outlines, exist in any social situation, then it can be concluded that oppression is taking place. The fact that participants are victimized and targeted as victims of violent attacks on the basis of their 'otherness', is sufficient to justify the existence of violence as a face of oppression in the Inanda area. Violence is systemic because it is directed at homosexuals simply because they are members of this subordinate social group. Yet it is pervasive as well because there appear to be no limits in respect of when and where it may occur in the lives of these participants. Accordingly the threat is always present with the participants constantly at risk of becoming victims. In my opinion the experiences of these eight participants in respect of this meta-theme can be aptly captured by the words of Young (2000, 46) who stated, "Just living under such a threat of attack... deprives the oppressed of freedom and dignity."

5.3. A displaced identity that burdens heterosexuals with "coming out"

Many parents, spoken of by the participants in my study, have no relationship with their sons and daughters who are gay or lesbian. Parents and community members in the Inanda area disapprove of the lifestyle associated with gays and lesbians. Many parents are afraid to even

speak openly about gays and lesbians in community meetings. They would rather they did not exist, fearing that their speaking about homosexuality may be perceived as their being perpetrators of homosexuality. Community leaders are afraid that standards of acceptable and appropriate behaviour will be compromised if they allow discussions on this matter. Distressing story after distressing story was told by gay and lesbian participants in my study. Campos (2005) warns that most homosexuals encounter horrible situations due to people in positions of power failing to take notice of their concerns when they report them and instead offer further labelling and mistreatment rather than support and aid, as has been the case here. It thus seems that gays and lesbians in the Inanda area have little recourse in respect of any harm exacted on them as most stakeholders refuse to address these issues. It is no wonder then that the participants in my study experiences feelings of displacement in their own neighbourhood and are afraid to "come out."

My study reveals that the majority of parents and community members do not encourage or accept gays and lesbians 'coming out' of the closet as there is a stigma attached to their identification as homosexuals with many community members viewing them in the same way in which common criminals are viewed, that is, viewed with much contempt and even resentment. This makes it very difficult for homosexuals to be accepted. My study therefore concurs with Altman's (1993, 20) claim that "to be a homosexual in our society is to be constantly aware that one bears a stigma." Altman (1993) highlights that the development of homosexual identity is a long process, one which is inevitably impacted on by the stigma that accompanies this identity. Participants' narratives highlight that instead of 'coming out' and choosing to lead an authentic life as gay or lesbian, many homosexuals rather choose to deny their authentic identity and spend miserable and lonely lives attempting to function as heterosexual people and thus colluding with, and conforming to, accepted norms and behaviours in the community. This has often occurred as a result of the perception that their "coming out" will ultimately be posing a major burden to the ones who love them most.

Any person pretending to be someone or something, other than who and what they authentically are, is likely going to experience internal struggles and challenges. On the one hand 'coming out' would be beneficial in that it would avoid a person living a lie, but on the other hand the alternative is just as negative – a life of stigmatization resulting in being ousted (displaced) by the community and burdening loved ones with having to face the comments and

torments of the overwhelming number of people in the Inanda community who openly reject homosexuality.

5.4. Experiencing living a poisoned identity that is unworthy of help and given little regard

The findings in my study have revealed that it is difficult for most communities to accept gays and lesbians often viewing them as poison which must naturally be rejected. Intolerance towards them abounds and they are labelled and called derogatory names on a daily basis. Heterosexuals assume that heterosexuality is the only correct and acceptable type of sexual orientation and neither tolerate nor entertain the notion of same-sex partners. As a direct result of this, gays and lesbians are treated as poison by their families and the communities in which they live, these groups tend to hold in high regard heterosexual norms. The vast majority of heterosexuals do not want to listen to, or communicate with, gays and lesbians. This is especially sad and evident when parents refuse to accept their children and often refuse to help them face the many adversities encountered by homosexuals contemporarily. Communities generally continue to conform to traditional and homophobic attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Homophobic prejudice judges and labels gays and lesbians as 'deviant', 'evil', 'abnormal', 'substandard' and 'defective' (Harro, 2000, 150). The existence of such prejudices do not allow room for any accommodation of gays and lesbians, or any acceptance of them as human beings. Instead they are viewed as unworthy of assistance from others and accordingly denied equal rights and social acceptance. It is not surprising then that the participants in my study often experience feeling as though little regard is given to them as human beings.

Indeed a link between Harro's (2000) theory of socialization and the paragraph above exists. Harro (2000) claims that individuals are socialized by powerful sources in the community to conform to roles, attitudes and behaviours that are purposefully meant to maintain the status quo. It is through constantly treating homosexuals like poison and giving them very little regard that they are systematically trained in 'how to be' normal or proper, acceptable and appropriate; by the standards of their parents and the community of course. This is a system which instils and perpetuates the belief that heterosexuality is normal and proper, while homosexuality is abnormal, deviant, unacceptable, improper and inappropriate; so justifying the treating of homosexuals like poison, denying them help when attacked and thus showing very little regard towards their overall well-being.

5.5. Experiencing an identity strong enough to fight for its rights

The data generated in my study has highlighted the very real tensions and contradictions which emerge for the eight participants in the process of coming to terms with their homosexuality and in turn, how this impacts on their subsequent choice to 'come out' or to hide their true sexual identity from the world for fear of further discrimination and oppression, a situation in which one should ideally, never find oneself when living in a democratic country like South Africa.

My study's findings tend to support claims that most dominant social group members in the Inanda area lack the conviction and the skills that will enable them to discuss and enter into a dialogue with gays and lesbians over their differences with the view to reconciling these. Most attempts by homosexuals to force inclusiveness has resulted in failure. Violence sadly seems to be most relied upon method of communicating with gays and lesbians. Violence and victimization are caused by people who refuse to accept the viewpoints or ways of life of the "others." In addition the heterosexuals spoken of in my study often do not want to entertain any deviation from the established norm of heterosexuality. Clark (1997) states that heterosexuals need to learn to accept what they cannot change, because they will miss the chance to give those they love the most precious gift they are capable of giving – that of love and acceptance; inclusion into a family and community and a sense of importance and belonging. Not meeting these basic social needs of individuals and groups of people, but rather showing them only violence and victimization has resulted in many homosexuals living in the Inanda area feeling an intense need to stand up and fight for equal rights and fair treatment.

As much as it is difficult for the participants in my study to "come out" it has become increasingly difficult for them to deny who they are, whether it be wholly or in part. Integrating the component parts of one's identity into a cohesive, unified sense of self, is a process that all human beings strive to fulfil (Tatum, 2000). Homosexuality is an aspect of identity that is a target of negative attention in a homophobic community, where heterosexuality prevails as the accepted, appropriate and dominant sexual orientation. This comprises the essence of the experience of 'otherness'. When this aspect of identity draws conscious negative attention from the majority of others in the Inanda community, individuals who have homosexual sexual orientations, experience dissonance (a lack of harmony and alignment between what the

community holds up as appropriate, accepted and 'normal' and what the individual personally experiences) to such a degree that they begin to feel as though enough is enough.

According to Hardiman and Jackson (1997, 17), "psychological colonization of the target group occurs through socializing the oppressed to internalize their oppressed condition and collude with the oppressor's ideology and social system". This is what Freire (1970) also refers to as the oppressed playing host to the oppressor. Social oppression exists in Inanda with regard to the dominance on the part of heterosexuals and the subordination on the part of homosexuals. This relationship between the agent group and the target group keeps the system of domination in place. However, "Recognizing the importance of collusion to the system of oppression does not mean that targets share equal responsibility for their situation with agents, or that they collude willingly" (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, 17). Rather, the collusion of gays and lesbians is the result of the dominance of heterosexism and the perpetuation of this unequal relation of power with regard to sexual orientation, through exercising "control of the minds" of the youth, and the ideology and culture of the community. The data generated in my study provides evidence that individuals are most certainly beginning to think more open-mindedly and speak more freely, thus placing pressure on family and community members in the Inanda area, who are, after all, the ones who play an important role in the operation and maintenance of oppression regarding sexual orientation. The participants in my study, based on their individual stories, have indeed come through many hardships as a result of their sexual orientations; but they have, however, remained resilient throughout and are therefore in spite of everything, fighting for their rights as human beings.

5.6. Conclusion

I believe that communities such as that of Inanda need brave democratic leaders to organize seminars and workshops to address homophobic awareness. Awareness and human rights for gays and lesbians must be made visible and the voices of homosexuals telling their unique and empowering stories must be heard and made public. Perhaps then, a more humanitarian understanding of their experiences and their lives will emerge and communities will come to accept and include them regardless of their differences. Forums could be held which bring all stakeholders together to enter into dialogue about these issues and so enable the people to work towards creating strategies to combat homophobia. Talk shows could be organized where gays and lesbians are invited to tell their stories from their perspectives. Through forums and

workshops, which bring people together to develop them in areas of diversity, family and community members can begin to acquire good communication skills thus reducing the chance of homosexuals experiencing feelings of displacement.

It is my hope that through hearing the brave voices of the gay and lesbian participants in my study, an increased awareness, acceptance and tolerance of their (and others in their position) difference and 'otherness' will be encouraged in readers. It is also hoped by me that the narratives of these participants will highlight the multiplicity and complexity of gay and lesbian experiences, thus paving a way forward in justifying a need to challenge the existing stereotypes assigned to gays and lesbians through this, and further studies in this area.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-structured interview questions

Question one

How did you discover that you are gay/lesbian? I would like to learn from you, please tell me more?

Question two

What was it like to come out of the closet?

Question three

As a gay/lesbian what are your experiences in the community?

Question four

Why are these experiences constructed in such a way?

Question five

Did you get support or acceptance?

Question six

How have these experiences impacted on your personal identity?

Question seven

What are the community leaders doing to bring awareness on various forms of oppressions and on human rights?

Question eight

What are you doing to educate or challenge heterosexuals and homophobia in the community?

Question nine

What names can you remember being called when you were young at school by your parents, family, peers and community?

Question ten

What terms/labels would you prefer to be called?

APPENDIX 2

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS

1. LESBIAN PARTICIPANT ONE

Question one.

My friendship with girls was very unusual; at the age 14 I was very much attached to a girl called Nelly. Nelly's parents were not happy about our friendship because we met almost everyday. We started staying only the two of us in a room, chatting sometimes kissing. I was jealous to see boys making friends with girls. The big struggle when Mdu was attached to Nelly. And at that time Nelly began to be confused. All my activities were boy's activities. Karate, soccer, I kept my hair short all the time.

Question two.

It was very difficult. I decided to dress the way I like. My mother told me that I am a girl, she gave birth to a girl not a boy, she further stated that your not 'ngqinili'. My moms word made me stubborn then I said to myself whether 'Ngqinili' or they may call me what , I like who I am.

There was once a meeting in my family after coming out of my closet, where most members of my family were hurt about my personal identity. I remember when my uncle visited me, when he came to my room he was astonished to see pictures of lesbians and gays. But he never said a word. When he left he sent me an SMS with the words from the bible which states about "before God's eyes, it is not good to dress like a girl if you are a boy or dress like a girl if you're a boy" it was difficult to go to the family church. I remember one day when I went to church with my friend x the priest looked at me very strangely. And I was surprised. I decided to leave my family church because I was not accepted by the priest and members of the church.

Neighbours reported that I have been bedding their daughters to have relationships with me, which was not true. So my mother was very much hurt about that. No one in my area wanted to see their daughter talking to me- they tried by all means to distance their daughters from me. Unfortunately we are all young girls who are growing in the same environment, so we definitely meet as age group.

Question three.

They say we don't want 'staban' here. We are gay. They call us with what ever they want to say. They say we are abnormal, we are criminals, we are sinners, we have come to destroy their children, we are a curse in the community, we deserve to die, they don't want to hear about such people, they neglect us, we feel discriminated, alienated, scared, afraid, lost, seeking for happiness, and peace. I find myself reserved. Boys dislike us they say we take girls who are suppose to be their girlfriends.

Question four.

Straight people are naïve. They are selfish. They are worried and state that their culture would be destroyed by homosexual behaviour. People seem to know only two colours so to say. They don't want to accept change. They talk about us neglecting others. They are more concerned about them they see others as nothing, invisible. Communities are not transformed. Nothing has been said about groups where gays/lesbians fall. People are stereotyping that leads to prejudice.

Question five.

No support from the community. In the end my mother supports me in that way because she is my mother, she has no choice. That's the kind of support I can tell you about.

Question six.

I have hatred towards boys. More especially because they are strong. They overpower us they beat us I dislike heterosexual people because wherever you go you will notice, hear thrown words to us. I don't like to be seen where there is a lot of heterosexuals, I am afraid to stay in my room without locking the door because I think someone will come and kill me. I live under pressure. I am experiencing homophobia and heterosexism.

Question seven.

They talk about their rights not other rights because to them there is no world for us. Gay and lesbians do not exist. Nothing has been organised to talk about minority groups that are experiencing oppressive behaviours.

Question eight.

I tell heterosexual people that it is good to live your life. I tell them that I am a human being like other human beings, only that my feelings are different. I tell them to treat others with respect, dignity and humanity.

I challenge them (peers) to have discussions not to try and seduce them but to give them information that is lacking about myself being different. Discussing with peers can eliminate homophobia.

Question nine.

At school there was a boy who called me Sipho. They call me staban, boy, fag, queer.

Question ten.

I want to be called lesbian because it means you understand me. I don't want to be called by boys name because it will mean you don't understand my identity.

2.LESBIAN PARTICIPANT TWO

Question one.

I grew up in rural areas. It was a routine for girls to go collect wood for cooking. I found it difficult for me to do; instead I looking after the cattle which were boys working. Parents forced me to do girls work but it was difficult for me to do girls work. I remember that it started when I was five years old. At the age of ten I met a girl named X. We played together and kissed each other, but I was naïve I didn't know what was happening. Nobody knew about my relationship with X, but my love for X was different. At the age of fourteen I realized that I was totally different, girls at my school talked about the interest they have in boys. It was different with me; instead I fell in love with another girl because X was in Johannesburg with her parents. We spoke and she revealed to me she felt the same way.

At the age of fourteen I decided to wear trousers only. At that time I was living with my aunt. My aunt forced me to wear a skirt and we had a fight about wearing skirt. My aunt noticed my behaviour and decided to send me to her church. A church dress was made for me but I only wore it in church.

Question two.

It was more than difficult. The first person to know lesbianism was my sister. She was shocked. She told me that people would kill me I must be careful. My mother was not happy, though she loves me and always fought for me. She said you are my daughter. My mother's friend told mom that she saw me kissing a girl on the way home. She started questioning my mother that your daughter is a big girl where is her boyfriend. I told her that maybe there will be umakoti. My mom was surprised and said to me I must take my clothes and go away. I refuse to go but she packed my bags and pushed me out of her room.

I started crying and begging her to let me in. she refused to open the door, until I went to my friend and slept there. In the morning I went back to my mom, who finally decided to talk to me. She started asking me about what I told her. After a long conversation, she realized that she cannot change that. She must give me support as a parent. She advised me to be careful outside home. I told everyone in my family. My aunt said there is a bad ancestor who is making me like that. My family supports me though they aren't happy.

Question three.

No one had confronted me, but there is that mocking me when gathered in meetings. Boys hate us; they want to rape us because most of us like me are virgins. Boys hate us they say we are confusing girls who are suppose to be their girlfriends. We live in isolation because people throw words if they see us. They say look at them they are a curse.

Question four.

People are naïve. They have no information. They are much concerned about their culture. They only know that a girl must fall in love with a boy. They don't know about same sex relationships. Communities are stereotyped. They are too rigid. They are not prepared to accept us, as human beings. Heterosexuals are not convinced that I was born with homosexual genes. Heterosexuals say we are going to influence and confuse their children. I don't trust bisexuals sometimes heterosexuals are puzzled about how you change and say now you're a homosexual. For a long time they have been living with you being heterosexual or normal. As a lesbian I believe that sometimes lesbians/gay are confused by their communities in the choice that they make.

Question five.

In the area that I live I get 50% support. I have started talking about homosexuality to few people who seemed not scared. It is difficult in other areas because people just can't accept us.

Question six.

I hate boys. Few are positive about our personal identity. Cant walk, talk say something openly about my personal identity because people always accuse me about why I don't act like this. I don't show up in other places where it might be dangerous. I usually isolate myself for safety. Sometimes I feel as if I live in a big shell.

Question seven.

Nothing has been done. Only that I experience forms of oppression as a minority person. It is not easy for community leaders to talk about others because communities are old fashioned. They don't want to change. Change is a lose to them. Instead they add on oppression calling gay/lesbian people as dirty, demons, who are influencing their kids. Communities are discriminating, stereotyped and deny that there is such a thing. So they alienate us on a daily basis. Gay/lesbian people live their lives lonely.

Question eight.

I have spoken to few people but I am scared to talk to anyone. My community is a homophobic area. I am scared that I might be killed. People don't accept us, heterosexism does exist. If a person asks me I do explain but nothing has been done to educate or challenge heterosexism.

Question nine.

They call me staban, nkonkoni, nqgingili or tomboys

Question ten.

To be called by my name or you can call me sis that is also fine.

3. LESBIAN PARTICIPANT THREE

Question one.

I came from a good background family, my Mother was an educator. Unfortunately she is late she died in May 2007. I was very open to her. I use to tell her everything I did at school and with my friends. At the age of nine I had a girl who we used to say is my baby when playing. I bought small things/presents for her like sweets and kissed her goodbye all the time. At home I spoke about her to my mom and told her about my relationship with her. My mother would tell me that such things are normal and it is something phasing. At boarding school my feelings of loving to kiss and hold girls grew. I discovered myself that I don't like boys and I started to have a girlfriend. But I was very worried about what is going on in my life.

My sister introduced me to a reverend of Salvation Army. He read bible stories to me about homosexuality. The Reverend told me that this is demon and advice me to fight it. I was so confused. I tried to change for about a year, but my feelings towards girls were strong. Then I proposed to a girl who loved me but was afraid to be with me. When I first kissed her she screamed and ran away. But now I am getting calls from her, she wants to meet me and don't know why cause I have moved on. I have another partner and we are planning to be life partners. My family never judged me. I decided to deal with it. If on earth and in heaven such feelings are considered as sins I will ask God why such feelings were created in my body. I believe maybe those who decided to be gay/lesbian by choice can be judged. But for me I don't think there is nothing I can do. My true feelings are of the same.

Question two.

My family has no problem. They love me regardless how I turn out. My extended family also loves and supports me. Really I have experienced nothing bad.

Question three.

It depends on the kind of area you live in. few people accepted me. The majority of heterosexuals have a negative attitude about my life. Boys especially intimidate us, when they see us they cal us names and sometimes want to stab us and say we are confusing girls who are suppose to be their girlfriends. They discriminate me; I am living my own life, lonely. The community where I am living is stereotype they have no knowledge about homosexuals. I have friend celebrities but they live two lives. They are afraid that their families will be devastated if they come out of the closet.

Question four.

Communities lack information. They are also stereotyped. They don't want to accept other people point of view. Communities are also afraid that they might be loosing their values. They say they are protecting their culture.

Question five.

My family fully accepts me, except my sister who dislikes my partner. There was a time where I decided to change after talking to the minister of the Salvation Army. My sister thought that my partner drew me back because she thought I was really changing. There is internalized oppression because communities are homophobic and their children are experiencing heterosexism. Communities don't see homosexuals; we are just invisible to them.

Question six.

I don't live the life I want. In town when I walk we hold hands. I can't do that in my community to be safe. Sometimes I become reserved. Because people would like to know about your life for the purpose of ill treating you. I hate boys because they shout saying we take their girlfriends.

Question seven.

Nothing has been organized. The community leader cares for them. They don't see us they actually ignore us. They don't want to say a word about gay/lesbian people, but they do talk about their rights, to own houses not gay and lesbian people.

Question eight.

I am not doing much but a person if asked me about my personal identity then I explain. Challenging heterosexism and homophobia is hard. I am afraid that I could be victimized. Maybe they can kill me because this year at Inanda they have done that to an innocent gay.

Question nine.

They call us Budget, staban, nkonkoni

Question ten.

I prefer being called sisi or by my name.

4. GAY PARTICIPANT ONE**Question one.**

At the age of eleven I realized that I was different. I use to play homes or houses where I used to call myself X. My friends were girls more. I did not like to play with boys. My parents especially my Dad accused me about that. I was impressed to watch stories in T.V about life history of gays and lesbians. When I watched those stories it was like I was looking myself in the mirror. My father use to switch of the T.V when gay and lesbian people appeared. My father dislikes gays and lesbians he also dislikes and hates me.

Question two.

There was a party at my neighborhood. At night I dressed like a lady and did make up. My friends and I enjoyed ourselves then my father showed up. He called me and wanted to find out what was going on with me. I told him that I am gay. It was difficult to believe, what I was telling him. My family had been shamed. They feel bad since I came out of the closet my family changed. They are not at all accepting my gayness. One day they arrange a girl to have dinner with me trying to seduce me. Finally the girl revealed to me that she is having dinner with me because my family arranged it. She explained that she doesn't think my parents realized that I am a staban. I explained to the girl that they know very well who I am but they are not accepting who I am. They were disappointed because I had to leave the girl at home for a meeting I had already planned that day. Ever since my life is miserable.

Question three.

The community at large feels pity for me. One lady has involved me in a community project. On the first day, everybody looked at me as if they are questioning something. On the second day they started calling me and asking questions about my identity. They tried to be calm because very few have thrown bad names at me. But they do not accept my culture as a gay. The community organizer hates me openly because the way he looked at me was questionable. He never uttered a word to me while I was doing the community project. The purpose of the lady who was involved me in the project was to let me known in the community.

Question four.

Heterosexuals are naïve. They have little information. Mostly they are afraid that their culture is going to be destroyed. We are carrying a curse straight to their families. Heterosexuals are afraid that we might be destructing what they value as their customs and values. People are stereotyped they don't want to change. They believe in what they are. They talk about themselves not others.

Question five.

My life is miserable. I live under a great depression. I have lost hope. I am like an animal at home. My parents, my granny are totally hurt about my preference. I live under such pain in my daily life. I used to sit and talk to my Dad about my school work before I came out of the closet. My achievements at primary school are amazing. Ever since I revealed who I am my Dad has never sat down with me as before. I have failed my metric and no one in my family can help me because when my dad gives me money to try something he says he is just throwing away. I get a bit of support from the community because they call me and want to find out what is happening in my life but not that I get full support from them.

Question six.

I don't live the life I want to live. Sometimes I try to please people for safety. I am not all free. I am scared. It is difficult to challenge life. I used to think about going to seek for a job or a school, but first thing come out from my mind, will I be accepted when I show up. I feel discriminated and accused now and then. Actually I am depressed, hopeless about life.

Sometimes when I am happy, I ask myself why I am happy because it's for a short period of time. I feel guilty and a failure, isolated because mostly I get negative attitude from my family. So I live my life all alone.

Question seven.

One member from the community has organized a job for me. Her aim was to let me expose to the community. She wants me to be known. But the community leaders are not doing anything to bring awareness on various forms of oppressions. They about their rights, not minority group's rights.

Question eight.

I am scared to challenge heterosexism and homophobia in the community. But I do talk to a person who shows friendship to me. Challenging heterosexism and homophobia in the community at large will mean death on side. Most heterosexuals are furious about our preference.

Question nine.

They call me staban, nkonkoni, after nine, nqgingili, and my father once called me staban when he was accusing me of something I didn't do. He never said sorry after discovering that somebody did it.

Question ten.

I will prefer to be called; sissy, by my name, gay you can call me bhuti that's fine.

APPENDIX 3

LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

Wade Cafun
Email: cafunw@ukzn.ac.za
Cell no: 0829612831

7 January 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to record that I have carried out a language editing on the dissertation:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF GAYS AND LESBIANS
LIVING IN THE INANDA AREA by Nombuso Thembi Mthembu.

Wade Cafun

APPENDIX 4

TURNITIN REPORT

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